

TALKS IN CHINA

BY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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VISVA-BHARATI

VISVA-BHARATI BOOK-SHOP

10 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta.

CHU CHEN-TAN

The Chinese Characters in the title-page form the name given to the Poet by his Chinese friends on the occasion of his 64th birthday in Peking on the 8th May, 1924. The personal name Rabindra, or Ravindra, was translated into Chinese as *Chên-tan* (*Tan* as Sun-rise for 'Ravi' – 'Sun', and *Chên* 'Thunder' for *Indra* the Thunder God), and the syllable *Chu*, from *Tien-chu*, an old Chinese name for India, was adopted as his surname. The three characters forming the full name stand as *Chu Chên-tan* which may be Englished as the 'Thunder-voiced Rising Sun of India.

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Printed by S. K. Bose at The Arunoday Art Press,
48, Grey Street, Calcutta.

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LECTURES DELIVERED IN APRIL AND MAY, 1924

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*Reports of Lectures delivered in China
in April and May, 1924.*

February, 1925.]

[Price Re 1-8

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Publisher—Karunabindu Biswas
10, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta.

To
My Friend
Susima (Tsemou-Hsu)
whose kind offices I owe my
introduction to the great
people of China.

Rabindranath Tagore

INTRODUCTION

BY

LIANG CHI CHAO

(President, Universities 'Association, Peking)

The great Indian sage and poet-philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore, will arrive very soon and will meet our students to the number of several thousands. I take this opportunity, therefore, of preparing a welcome for him.

First of all, I want you to understand that all great personalities are many-sided. They are like the seven-coloured *Mani*, which presents different aspects of brilliance to different observers. You all know that I am fond of treating things from a historical point of view; you know too that I have deep faith in Buddhism. As the proverb says: "No man can speak three words without disclosing his own craft." So what I am going to tell you to-day is but my own impression as a historian and a Buddhist. I cannot give a proper introduction to Rabindranath Tagore, still less can I pretend to give adequate expression to the enthusiastic welcome of all sections of our people.

Rabindranath Tagore has visited Europe, America and Japan. Wherever he goes he receives a tremendous welcome. You will recall that outburst of enthusiasm in the Chien Men Station, on the day he arrived, such as has never been accorded to any other foreign guest, so warm it was, and so sincere.

The meaningless idolatry of hero-worship is common amongst the peoples of Europe and America. We, Chinese, have not yet acquired this fashionable habit. We, who welcome Rabindranath Tagore, may each have our several reasons,—it may even be that, like the Europeans and Americans, some of us are merely hero-worshipping him; but we must all recognise the one great central idea, that he comes to us from the country which is our nearest and dearest brother,—India.

To say that the country of India is our brother is not a mere matter of courtesy to our guest. It has its foundation in history.

In ancient times China did not enjoy that facility of communication which was the privilege of the races bordering the Mediterranean Sea. We suffered from the disadvantage of being shut up in one corner of eastern Asia without any means

of communicating with other great races and cultures. The islands in the eastern and southern oceans were populated by savages. America, on the far side of the Pacific, gave no sign of civilisation. Beyond our western and northern frontiers there were those barbarous and ferocious races, whose business it ever was to threaten and devastate, but never to help us.

It is well for us to remember that this little privilege of culture, which we possess to-day, has been handed down to us by our ancestors, who laboured long within secluded boundaries, unaided and single-handed. It is also due to this seclusion of its environment that our culture gives the impression of being monotonous and conservative to an extraordinary degree.

But across our south-western boundary, there was a great and cultured country, India. Both in character and geography, India and China are like twin brothers. Before most of the civilised races became active, we two brothers had already begun to study the great problems which concern the whole of mankind. We had already accomplished much in the interests of humanity. India was ahead of us and we, the little brother, followed behind. But

Nature had not been kind. She had placed between us a vast area of unfeeling desert and two great ranges of cruel snowy peaks, which separated us for thousands of years. It was not till two thousand years ago that we were given gradually to know that we had a very good elder brother on the earth.

When did these two great countries begin to communicate with each other?

According to Indian history, King 'Asoka sent a number of missionaries to propagate Buddhist ideas. Probably some of them had travelled as far as China. Our own tradition says that in the time of the famous Chin Sze Huang (who built the Great Wall), there were already more than ten Hindus, who had been to Chang-an and who were imprisoned and killed by him. Asoka and Chin Sze Huang were contemporaries and therefore this might have been true. But we need not worry over half fairy tales.

What we as historians are able to vouch for is that the first communication between us as brothers occurred in the first century of the era of Christ. From the tenth year of Han Yung Tsin to the fifth year of Tang Chen Yuan (67—789 'A.D.), roughly during eight hundred years, the Hindu scholars,

who came to China, numbered twenty-four, which may be added thirteen from Kashmir (which in Tang times was not recognised as part of India) thus making thirty-seven in all, not counting those who came from other countries on the eastern and western side of Chung Lin (Turkestan). Our scholars, who went to India to study, during the period from the western Tsin to the Tang dynasties (265—790 A.D.) numbered 187, the names of 105 of whom we can ascertain. Among the most famous from India were Tamolosa (*Dharma-raksha*), Chu Shien (*Buddha-bhadra*), and Chen Ti (*Jina-bhadra*) and from China, Fa Hien, Yuan Chuang and I Tsing.

During the period of 700 or 800 years, we lived like affectionate brothers, loving and respecting one another.

And now we are told that, within recent years, we have at last come into contact with civilised (!) races. Why have they come to us? They have come coveting our land and our wealth; they have offered us as presents cannon balls dyed in human blood; their factories manufacture goods and machines which daily deprive our people of their crafts. But we two brothers were not like that in the days

gone by. We were both devoted to the cause of the universal truth, we set out to fulfil the destiny of mankind, we felt the necessity for co-operation. We Chinese specially felt the need for leadership and direction from our elder brothers, the people of India. Neither of us were stained in the least by any motive of self-interest—of that we had none.

During the period when we were most close and affectionate to one another, it is a pity that this little brother had no special gift to offer to its elder brother, whilst our elder brother had given to us gifts of singular and precious worth, which we can never forget.

Now what have we so received?

1. India taught us to embrace the idea of absolute freedom,—that fundamental freedom of mind, which enables us to shake off all the fetters of past traditions and habits as well as the present customs of a particular age,—that spiritual freedom which casts off the enslaving forces of material existence. It was not merely that negative aspect of freedom, which consists in ridding ourselves of outward oppression and slavery, but that emancipation of the individual from his own self, through which

men attain great liberation, great ease and great fearlessness.

2. India also taught us the idea of absolute love, that pure love towards all living beings which eliminates all obsessions of jealousy, anger, impatience and disgust, which expresses itself in deep pity and sympathy for the foolish, the wicked and the sinful,—that absolute love, which recognises the inseparability between all beings, “The equality of friend and enemy,” “The oneness of myself and all things.” This great gift is contained in the Ta Tsang Jen (Buddhist classics). The teachings in these seven thousand volumes can be summed up in one phrase: *To cultivate sympathy and intellect, in order to attain absolute freedom through wisdom, and absolute love through pity.*

3. But our elder brother had still something more to give. He brought us invaluable assistance in the field of literature and art. In the first place, these came indirectly through Si Yu; and then directly from the Indian sages, who came to China bringing with them as gifts for presentation to our Emperor, their pictures, sculptures and books. Thirdly, they were brought by the Chinese scholars on their return from India; for instance, in the biography of Tuan

Chuang, besides his observations on the classics, there was a list of articles in which were included all kinds of works of art. Lastly, we learnt from the translated classics not only of India's wisdom, but also of its art.

4. Of minor gifts, I will enumerate only the following :

Music.—This came indirectly through Si Yu. We have no idea what our ancient music was like, for after the Southern and Northern Dynasties, it had degenerated and had almost disappeared. It is possible that something was left in the South of the Yang Tze river, but in the North our own music gave way before the Indian influences, which were brought in by Si Yu. The Sui and the Tang dynasties succeeded the Northern dynasties and united the empire and thereafter this northern music predominated. The most popular tunes were Kan Chou, I Chou and Liang Chou, all names of districts in the Sin Chang and Kan Su provinces. But at that time these provinces were almost wholly under the influence of India. To-day we have no record of the music of this era, except what has been preserved by the Japanese Royal House. But from what is recorded in the history of Tang and the Book of

Music as well as in the appreciations of music found in our general literature, we can be certain that that music must have been beautiful and exquisite. The cause of such excellence is probably due to the union of Chinese and Indian modes.

Architecture.—That China has been influenced by India in her architecture is an obvious fact although we have lost sight of the great work in the *Cha Lan* Temple in Lo Yang, and although we have to rely upon accounts met with in literature and poetry to obtain any idea of the beauty and grandeur of the temples of *Yung Pin* (Perpetual Peace) and *Tsze* (Material Grace). But we have still standing a number of ruins which tell us of the glory of those olden days. The pagoda is purely Indian in origin; we never had anything like it before the days of Indian influence. We do not always realise how much this particular form of architecture adds to the natural beauty of our landscape. We cannot imagine the West Lake in Hangchow without its two pagodas, the grand *Luei Fong* (Thunder peak) and the graceful *Pan Su*. What charm would be in the City of Pien Liang, if it were not for the presence of the iron pagoda and the pagoda *Tan Tai* (House of Abundance)? The

oldest piece of architecture in Peking is the pagoda in front of the temple *Tien Nien* (Heavenly Peace) built at the end of the 6th century A. D. What beauty of harmony does the island of *Chung Hua* (Fairy flower) in Pei Hei, reveal with the white pagoda on its peak and the long verandah below, which the combination of Chinese and Indian architecture alone could have achieved! There as elsewhere we see the wonderful interplay of these two cultures.

Painting.—The paintings of the most ancient period of our history have disappeared. Only from the stone tablets and stone inscriptions, such as the famous Han paintings in Wu Liang Tsze and Joh Siang Shien, do we obtain a glimpse of the fine simplicity of style in the paintings of that period. The most renowned painters in our early history were Kuo Tan Wei and Kuo Hu To. They were famous for their paintings of Buddha. Another interesting relic is still to be found in Lo San, the famous shadow of Buddha, which I suspect to be the first piece of oil painting in China. A few of the works of Wang Wei and Wu Tao Tsze are still preserved and for the most part they are Buddhistic pictures. It seems obvious that, from the East Chin dynasty to that of

Tang, there was continuous communication between India and China and this, with its introduction of numerous Indian pictures, had a shaping influence upon Chinese art; in fact we might go further and say that we probably owe the very foundation of our Chinese painting to Indian influence. A great school continued to flourish till the North Sung dynasty, when it was superseded by the artists of our Royal Academy. It is still regarded as embodying the classical style of Chinese painting.

Sculpture.—In olden times we had engravings upon stone, but never I think, sculpture in three dimensions before the introduction of Buddhism. From the Book of Famous Monks, we learn that Tai An Tao (Tsin dynasty), who was well known as a painter and a literary man, was also a sculptor. He and his brother worked together upon a large image of Buddha, which enjoyed great fame in its day. Then there are records of famous sculptures executed during the six dynasties and the Sui and Tang. Unfortunately all these were destroyed during the Civil Wars as well as by the deliberate vandalism of three emperors, who were bitterly opposed to Buddhism. We still possess to-day the great rock sculptures and reliefs, three or four

thousand in number, at Lo Yang and Lung Men executed during the Wei and the Tsi dynasties. But the greatest treasure we have is the group of figures at Yung Kuang, Ta Tung and Shensi, large and small, not less than a thousand in number. It is said that the style is of Gandhara in Afghanistan, the result of the meeting between the Greek and the Indian cultures. This is indeed a priceless possession of which, if it had not been for our elder brother, we should have been deprived. Incidentally, we might also mention the art of the *kakemono*, whose origin we also owe to India. In fact in the inventory of Yuen Tsang, there is a record of a number of *kakemono*, which he brought back with him from India.

Drama.—We can trace the art of drama back to the play of Fish and Dragon, which was probably a species of magic or trickery, rather than drama in the modern sense. Dancing and singing had their respective origin in ancient days, but the combination of the two does not seem to appear till after the Tsin Dynasty. The earliest operatic play we know of was called Pu Tou. Modern research has shown that it was introduced from a country called Pato, near Southern India, some ten thousand miles

from Ta Tung. The story of the play centres round a man who went into the mountains to avenge his father and was killed by a tiger. The hero expresses his feelings in passionate songs and dances. Later plays such as Lian Ling Wang, the King of Lian Ling and the Tao Yao Niang were all patterned on Pu Tou. If this is true, then we are again in debt to India in the field of drama.

Poetry and Fiction.—To say that India influenced us even in poetry and fiction would perhaps seem astonishing. But we have reason to believe that the celebrated translation of the two great books, Fun Pen Shen Tsai (the life of Sakyamuni by Asvaghosha) and Ta Shen Chung Yen Tsin (Mahayana Sutra) by the great Indian poet Ma Ming (Indian name unknown) did exert a decided influence upon our literature. Our original poetry from the Book of Odes to the five syllable lines of Han and Wei included only short personal lyrics. Narrative poetry never made its appearance until the six dynasties when such poems as Kung Chou Tung Nan Fe and Mou Lan, Fun Pen Shin A Sai, originally a long biographical poem, but now rendered into Chinese prose in four books, were composed. They not only introduced the great in-

fluence of Hindu literature but remained actively influential among literary circles in China during the six dynasties. The vast imagination and rich emotional appeal of Hindu literature opened new vistas for the Chinese poets. There is clear evidence that our novel writing originated under the direct influence of Mahayana translations. It seems to me that our tales from the Tsin to the Tang period, were modelled on them. Our novels, properly speaking, did not appear till the Sung period and were largely the product of our study of Hua Yuan and Pan Chi.

Astronomy & Calendar.—This special branch of science was early cultivated in China, but received further development in the Tang period, when the publication of Ju Tchu Sie showed the distinct influence of India.

Medicine.—This was an original art in China but it received great encouragement from our contact with India. What is recorded in the History of Suey and the Books on Art and Literature in the History of Tang is sufficient proof of my assertion.

Alphabet.—The Chinese language is by nature pictorial, and that is a great disadvantage. With the introduction of Buddhism and Sanskrit a number

of Indian scholars attempted to invent an alphabetical system to solve our difficulties. Although it was rather crude and did not yield very satisfactory results, it furnished us with valuable material for further experimentation.

Literary style.—Ancient Chinese written books do not show sufficient effort at organisation and therefore lack clarity of presentation. With the coming in of Buddhist classics, it began to be more systematic and consequently more lucid and logical in the exposition of ideas. Indian Logic (Hetuvidya) and methodology opened a new era in China in the art of writing. Yuan Chuang was one of the most painstaking students of this new science and he and his followers created a new school of thought famous for its rigorous analytical and critical method, which stood in direct opposition to the contemplative and introspective method of the Dhyana (Chhan or Zen) School of Buddhists.

Educational method.—Exactly how education was conducted in ancient China no one is able to say, but we are quite certain that Confucius and Mencius did not resort to the method of addressing large audiences for the propagation of their teachings, and it is quite likely, therefore, that the system

of formal lecturing, with which we are so familiar to-day, came from India. Furthermore the academies which flourished since the Tang dynasty cannot be other than Buddhist in origin. Whether this setting apart of particular institutions for the investigation of specialised problems, has great educational value or not is another question, but we must acknowledge the important position which this method occupies in Chinese educational history.

Social Organisation.—The unit of Chinese society is the family. The different forms of social organisation are only the family in its various modifications. Since Buddhism became popular in China, public bodies with religious and scholarly purposes, independent of the family, began to appear. And these flourished in such extraordinary degree that the power of Government could have no control over them. The Pu To islands, up to the present day, enjoy exclusive judicial privileges and are administered on a peculiar social basis of a more or less communistic nature.

What I have referred to above comprise the main elements of our Buddhistic heritage and I am proud to say that we have made use of it to good purpose. Indian thought has been entirely assimilated

into our own world of experience and has become an inalienable part of our consciousness. It has helped us to develop our faculties and has enabled us to achieve notable results in various fields of literary and artistic endeavour. Even if we confine our case to Buddhism itself, we find that we have made some worthy contributions to its many metaphysical systems, forming ever new schools of thought upon the foundation of the old, through the energy and application of men like Yuan Chuang; so that we may take just pride in saying that Buddhism has become as distinctly Chinese as it is Indian.

We have unfortunately been separated from one another now for at least one thousand years and have each pursued our respective lines of development. We have had calamities during these years of separation. What have we not experienced? We have been threatened, mocked, trampled upon and have suffered all possible mortifications, so much so indeed that not only have we been looked upon with contemptuous eyes, but we ourselves have begun to lose our sense of self-respect.

But we have faith in the imperishability of human endeavour and the seeds we have sown, in

spite of the many vicissitudes and inclemencies which we are passing through, will eventually bring us a harvest in the fulness of time. Do not we find an inspiring symbol in the ancient trees of the sacred wood round Confucius' tomb, reputed to have been planted by himself and his chief disciples, which though shrunk with senility and almost in a petrified state, are yet capable of manifesting their hidden vitality by shooting forth new branches of tender green, when the earth is awakened to the call of Spring? Both the civilisations represented by India and China are hoary with ancient traditions and yet I feel that there is in them the vigour of eternal youth, which shows itself to-day in India in the two great personalities of Tagore and Gandhi.

After a thousand years of separation during which period, however, we two continued to cherish thoughts of love for one another, this elder brother of ours has once more come to us animated with fraternal sentiments. Both of us bear lines of sorrow on our face, our hair is grey with age, we stare with a blank and vacant look as if we are just awakened from a dream; but, as we gaze on each other, what recollections and fond memories of our early youth rise in our mind,—of those days, when we shared

our joys and sorrows together ! Now that we have once more the happiness of embracing each other we shall not allow ourselves to be separated again.

We would welcome Rabindranath Tagore in the same spirit as when more than one thousand years ago the people of Lu San welcomed Chang Ti. Rabindranath Tagore wishes to make it known that he is not a religious teacher or an educationist or a philosopher, he says that he is only a poet. This we fully acknowledge. And he says also that he cannot under any circumstances place himself on the same level as his predecessors, who came in our early dynasties, because India at that time was in a period of great epic pre-eminence ; it was an epoch which was capable of giving birth to great ideals and noble personalities, and therefore totally different in its spirit to the present era of transition, when human thoughts and ideas are in a state of turmoil and confusion and therefore offer no encouragement to the development of genuine and worthy personalities. This sentiment we can also, I think, indorse.

And yet, to be a great poet needs more than an exquisite sense of what is artistic,—one must also be inspired by serious and magnanimous thoughts. In

the personality of Rabindranath Tagore, as well as in his poetry, we find that exemplification of those principles of absolute love and absolute freedom, which form the basis of Hindu culture and civilisation. I have no adequate idea of Hindu poetry in the great classical period and cannot, therefore, compare that with the work of our distinguished guest. But I am perfectly sure that Rabindranath Tagore is as important to us as Asvaghosha who wrote the life of Buddha was in ancient days, and we hope the influence he is going to exert on China will not in any way be inferior to that of Kumarajiva and Chang Ti.

Rabindranath Tagore says also that he has nothing to offer as a gift from India, but he wishes to express the sentiments of love of the entire people of India from which he has come as a representative. I wish to say in reply that the sentiments of love are more worthy than all the gifts that he can possibly offer us. We are more than overjoyed to receive them and we wish that he would take back with him our love and sympathy, which are, I can assure him, even more intense than his own.

I wish, in concluding, to say something of great

practical importance to you. Rabindranath Tagore has come to visit us; and we ought to remember that when of old thirty-seven representatives came from India there were actually some hundred and eighty-seven people to return the visit. We hope that on this occasion the love between China and India will not terminate with the one or two months which Rabindranath Tagore is able to spend in this country. The responsibility that we bear to the whole of mankind is great indeed, and there should be, I think, a warm spirit of co-operation between India and China. The coming of Rabindranath Tagore will, I hope, mark the beginning of an important period of history.

If we can avail of this occasion to renew the intimate relationship which we had with India and to establish a really constructive scheme of co-operation, then our welcome to Rabindranath Tagore will have real significance.

**TALKS
IN
CHINA**

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

Lately I read an observation in one of your papers that, being a philosopher, I was half an hour late in attending a particular meeting. I could satisfactorily explain my conduct if the complaint were restricted to this one casual event, but I believe the writer took it to be a symbol of some truth about me which was not accidental. I suppose that what gave him more serious concern was that according to him I was altogether out of date in this modern age, that I ought to have been born 2,000 years ago when poets dreamed over their brimming wine-cups in the moonlight, and philosophers ignored everything immediate, time and space.

This has caused me some surprise, which I am sure will grow into amusement when I have more leisure than I have now. Almost from my boyhood I have been accustomed to hear from my own countrymen angry remonstrances that I was too crassly modern, that I had missed all the great lessons from the past, and with it my right of entry into a venerable civilisation like that of India. For your people I

am obsolete, and therefore useless, and for mine, newfangled and therefore obnoxious. I do not know which is true.

Dr. Hu Shih, yesterday, in the capacity of astrologer, calculated from the sun and stars some augury on my visit to this country. I suppose he will be able to tell from the antics of the stars, under what auspices, and what contradictory influences I was born. He will let me know why this unfortunate being has been so continually suspected to be contraband,—smuggled on to the wrong shore of time,—not only by his own countrymen to whom he is too familiar, but by others to whom he could hardly have yet given any occasion for grave anxiety. Because of this misunderstanding, I have been asked by my friends to introduce myself to you with some biographical details so that my ideas may not appear to you too visionary, and frighten you as does an apparition that has lost its context of life.

I was born in 1861 : that is not an important date of history, but it belongs to a great period of our history in Bengal. You do not know perhaps that we have our places of pilgrimage in those spots where the rivers meet in confluence, the rivers which to us are the symbols of the spirit of life in nature,

and which in their meeting present emblems of the meeting of spirits, the meeting of ideals. Just about the time I was born the currents of three movements had met in the life of our country.

One of these movements was religious, introduced by a very great-hearted man of gigantic intelligence, Raja Rammohan Roy. It was revolutionary, for he tried to re-open the channel of spiritual life which had been obstructed for many years by the sands and debris of creeds that were formal and materialistic, fixed in external practices lacking spiritual significance.

There was a great fight between him and the orthodox who suspected every living idea that was dynamic. People who cling to an ancient past have their pride in the antiquity of their accumulations, in the sublimity of time-honoured walls around them. They grow nervous and angry when some great spirit, some lover of truth, breaks open their enclosure and floods it with the sunshine of thought and the breath of life. Ideas cause movement and all movements forward they consider to be a menace against their warehouse security.

This was happening about the time I was born. I am proud to say that my father was one of the

great leaders of that movement, a movement for whose sake he suffered ostracism and braved social indignities. I was born in this atmosphere of the advent of new ideals, which at the same time were old, older than all the things of which that age was proud.

There was a second movement equally important. A certain great man, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who, though much older than myself, was my contemporary and lived long enough for me to see him, was the first pioneer in the literary revolution which happened in Bengal about that time.

Our self-expression must find its freedom not only in spiritual ideas but in literary manifestations. But our literature had allowed its creative life to vanish. It lacked movement and was fettered by a rhetoric rigid as death. This man was brave enough to go against the orthodoxy which believed in the security of tombstones and in that perfection which can only belong to the lifeless. He lifted the dead weight of ponderous forms from our language and with a touch of his magic wand aroused our literature from her age-long sleep. What a vision of beauty she revealed to us when she awoke in the fullness of her strength and grace.

There was yet another movement started about this time in my country which was called National. It was not fully political, but it began to give voice to the mind of our people trying to assert their own personality. It was a voice of indignation at the humiliation constantly heaped upon us by people who were not oriental, and who had, especially at that time, the habit of sharply dividing the human world into the good and the bad according to what was similar to their life and what was different.

This contemptuous spirit of separateness was perpetually hurting us and causing great damage to our own world of culture. It generated in the young men of our country distrust of all things that had come to them as an inheritance from their past. The old Indian pictures and other works of art were laughed at by our students in imitation of the laughter of their European schoolmasters.

Though latterly our teachers themselves have changed their mind, their disciples have not yet fully regained confidence in the merit of our art traditions even where such merit is permanent. They have had a long period of encouragement in developing an appetite for third-rate copies of French pictures, for gaudy oleographs abjectly cheap, for

the pictures that are products of mechanical accuracy of a stereotyped standard, and they still consider it to be a symptom of superior culture to be able disdainfully to refuse oriental works of creation.

The modern young men of India nodded their heads and said that true originality lay not in the discovery of the rhythm of the essential in the heart of reality but in the full lips, tinted cheeks and bare breasts of imported pictures. The same spirit of rejection, born of utter ignorance, was cultivated in other departments of our culture. It was the result of the hypnotism exercised upon the minds of the younger generation by people who were loud of voice and strong of arm.

The spirit of revolt had just awakened when I was born and some people were already trying to stem the tide. This movement had its leaders in my own family, in my brothers and cousins, and they stood up to save the people's mind from being insulted and ignored by the people themselves.

We have to find some basis that is universal, that is eternal, and we have to discover those things which have an everlasting value. The national movement was started to proclaim that we must not be indiscriminate in our rejection of the past. This

was not a reactionary movement but a revolutionary one, because it set out with a great courage to deny and to oppose all pride in mere borrowings.

These three movements were on foot and in all three the members of my own family took active part. We were ostracised because of our heterodox opinions about religion and therefore we enjoyed the freedom of the outcaste. We had to build our own world with our own thoughts and energy of mind. We had to build it from the foundation, and therefore had to seek the foundation that was firm.

We cannot create foundations, but we can build a superstructure. These two must go together, the giving of expression to new life and the seeking of foundations which must be in the heart of the people themselves. Those who believe that life consists in change because change implies movement, should remember that there must be an underlying thread of unity or the change, being unmeaning, will cause conflict and clash. This thread of unity must not be of the outside, but in our own soul.

As I say, I was born and brought up in an atmosphere of the confluence of three movements, all of which were revolutionary. I was born in a

family which had to live its own life, which led me from my young days to seek guidance for my own self-expression in my own inner standard of judgment. The medium of expression doubtless was my mother tongue. But the language which belonged to the people had to be modulated according to the urging which I as an individual had.

No poet should borrow his medium ready-made from some shop of respectability. He should not only have his own seeds but prepare his own soil. Each poet has his own distinct medium of language,—not because the whole language is of his own make, but because his individual use of it, having life's magic touch, transforms it into a special vehicle of his own creation.

The races of man have poetry in their heart and it is necessary for them to give, as far as is possible, a perfect expression to their sentiments. For this they must have a medium, moving and pliant, which can freshly become their very own, age after age. All great languages have undergone and are still undergoing changes. Those languages which resist the spirit of change are doomed and will never produce great harvests of thought and literature. When forms become fixed, the spirit either weakly

accepts its imprisonment within them, or rebels. All revolutions consist of the fight of the within against invasion by the without.

There was a great chapter in the history of life on this earth when some irresistible inner force in man found its way out into the scheme of things, and sent forth its triumphant mutinous voice, with the cry that it was not going to be overwhelmed from outside by the huge brute beast of a body. How helpless it appeared at the moment, but has it not nearly won? In our social life also, revolution breaks out when some power concentrates itself in outside arrangements and threatens to enslave for its own purpose the power which we have within us.

When an organisation which is a machine, becomes a central force, political, commercial, educational or religious, it obstructs the free flow of inner life of the people and waylays and exploits it for the augmentation of its own power. To-day such concentration of power is fast multiplying on the outside and the cry of the oppressed spirit of man is in the air which struggles to free itself from the grip of screws and bolts, of unmeaning obsessions.

Revolution must come and men must risk revilement and misunderstanding, especially from those

who want to be comfortable, who put their faith in materialism and convention, and who belong truly to the dead past and not to modern times, the past that had its age in distant antiquity when physical flesh and size predominated, and not the mind of man.

Purely physical dominance is mechanical and modern machines are merely exaggerating our bodies, lengthening and multiplying our limbs. The modern child delights in this enormous bodily bulk, representing an inordinate material power, saying "Let me have the big toy and no sentiment which can disturb it." He does not realise that we are returning to that antediluvian age which revelled in its production of gigantic physical frames, leaving no room for the freedom of the inner spirit.

All great human movements in the world are related to some great ideal. Some of you say that such a doctrine of spirit has been in its death-throes for over a century and is now moribund; that we have nothing to rely upon but external forces and material foundations. But I say, on my part, that your doctrine was obsolete long ago. It was exploded in the springtime of life, when mere size was swept off the face of the world, and was replaced

by man, brought naked into the heart of creation, man with his helpless body, but with his indomitable mind and spirit.

The impertience of material things is extremely old. The revelation of spirit in man is truly modern : I am on its side, for I am modern. I have explained how I was born into a family which rebelled, which had faith in its loyalty to an inner ideal. If you want to reject me, you are free to do so. But I have my right as a revolutionary to carry the flag of freedom of spirit into the shrine of your idols,—material power and accumulation.

II

Even when we come to a foreign land we seek for our own. And that we only find in something which comes from the abundance in the heart of its people, representing their surplus which can be offered to and appropriated by their guests. Those whose souls are poor cannot afford to ask foreigners into their hearts and homes. Only those who are rich in love can afford to give shelter.

The soil on which has flourished an ancient forest with innumerable generations of trees, be-

comes deep, rich and fruitful by the shedding of leaves and flowers. Your old civilisation has enriched the soil of the heart. Its constant human touch has a vitalising effect upon everything belonging to it. This civilisation could not have lasted so long, if it had not been eminently human, if it had not been full of the life of the spirit.

There have been other civilisations which have produced their harvest of thought and ideals and beauty, but these have not persisted and after a while they have become barren. But yours, because of its depth of soil, has nourished the great tree of life producing hospitable shade and fruit for travellers who come from a far off land. I have felt it and I cannot but believe that your literature and all your other forms of self-expression are deeply instinct with this spirit of hospitality. For the best and highest form of self-expression is society itself, and I feel that I have already drunk from its cup some draught of *amrita*, of deathlessness, because of which we who come from another land feel at home in this land of ancient civilisation.

I have read this afternoon in a paper that you have been described as *human*. I find its evidence everywhere. I have received a wonderful

welcome which has made me feel that you are eminently human.

I have been reading translations from some of your books of poetry and I have been fascinated by something in the quality of your literature. It is characteristically your own, and I have not seen anything like it in any other literature that I know of.

But it is not my intention to talk of your literature before those who know it so well.

What I want to tell you of is the problem of literature in my own country. We also have been dominated by a classical form that was rigid, a classical perfection that had not the movement of life. But the influence of the Sanskrit classics was limited only to learned communities and had no real sway over the literature of the people themselves. We have lost all traces of our ancient folk literature, which however must at one time have had a separate existence of its own. In the classic literature of India we find indications of a parallel stream flowing in the heart of the people which must have found expression in their own spoken language and from which the Sanskrit poets often received their inspiration. But because dialects had continually changed

and had not been recorded in writing, many of them became obsolete and disappeared.

Some of our modern vernaculars however developed permanent forms and produced a very rich harvest of literature. Our friend here, Professor Kshitimohan Sen, who has studied the poetry of mediaeval India, can tell you of the great mystic poets who flourished in India from the 13th to the 16th and the 17th centuries. I became acquainted with their writings through him, and I was amazed to discover how modern they were, how full of genuine and earnest feeling of life and of beauty. All true things are ever modern and can never become obsolete.

We find in India that a deep mystic and religious sentiment has kept the mind of the people alive. In fact, it has always been the mission of our sages to give consolation to those living outside the pale of respectability and belonging to the castes which are looked down upon. They were inspired with some thing that was divine in their own being, which made the heart of the people vocal. The poems that have come out of such contact have marvellous depth of wisdom and beauty of form. We have in Bengal a wealth of such old lyrics inspired by the Vaishnava movement.

When I began my life as a poet, the writers among our educated community however took their inspiration from English literature. I suppose it was fortunate for me that I never in my life had what is called an education, that is to say, the kind of school and college training which is considered proper for a boy of respectable family. Though I cannot say I was altogether free from the influence that ruled the young minds of those days, the course of my writings was nevertheless saved from the groove of imitative forms. I believe it was chiefly because I had the good fortune to escape the school training which could set up for me an artificial standard based upon the prescription of the school master. In my versification, vocabulary and ideas I yielded myself to the vagaries of an untutored fancy which brought castigation upon me from critics who were learned, and uproarious laughter from the witty. My ignorance combined with my heresy turned me into a literary outlaw.

When I began my career I was ridiculously young; in fact, I was the youngest of the writers of that time who had made themselves articulate. I had neither the protective armour of mature age, nor that of a respectable English education. So in my

seclusion of contempt and qualified encouragement I had my freedom. Gradually I grew up in years,—for which, however, I claim no credit. Gradually I cut my way through derision and occasional patronage into a recognition in which the proportion of praise and blame was very much like that of land and water on our earth.

If you ask me what gave me boldness, when I was young, I should say that one thing was my early acquaintance with the old Vaishnava poems of Bengal, full of the freedom of metre and courage of expression. I think I was only twelve when these poems first began to be re-printed. I surreptitiously got hold of copies from the desks of my elders. For the edification of the young I must confess that this was not right for a boy of my age. I should have been passing my examinations and not following a path that would lead to failure. I must also admit that the greater part of these lyrics was erotic and not quite suited to a boy just about to reach his teens. But my imagination was fully occupied with the beauty of their forms and the music of their words; and their breath, heavily laden with voluptuousness, passed over my mind without distracting it.

My vagabondage in the path of my literary career had another reason. My father was the leader of a new religious movement, a strict monotheism based upon the teachings of the Upanishads. My countrymen in Bengal thought him almost as bad as a Christian, if not worse. So we were completely ostracised, which probably saved me from another disaster, that of imitating our own past.

Most of the members of my family had some gift,—some were artists, some poets, some musicians and the whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation. I had a deep sense, almost from infancy, of the beauty of nature, an intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air. At the same time I had a peculiar susceptibility to human kindness. All these craved expression, and naturally I wanted to give them my own expression. The very earnestness of my emotions yearned to be true to themselves though I was too immature to give their expression any perfection of form.

Since then I have gained a reputation in my country, but a strong current of antagonism in a

large section of my countrymen still persists. Some say that my poems do not spring from the heart of the national traditions; some complain that they are incomprehensible, others that they are unwholesome. In fact, I have never had complete acceptance from my own people, and that too has been a blessing; for nothing is so demoralising as unqualified success.

This is the history of my career. I wish I could reveal it to you more clearly through the narration of my own work in my own language. I hope that will be possible some day or other. Languages are jealous. They do not give up their best treasures to those who try to deal with them through an intermediary belonging to an alien rival. You have to court them in person and dance attendance on them. Poems are not like gold or other substantial things that are transferable. You cannot receive the smiles and glances of your sweetheart through an attorney, however diligent and dutiful he may be.

I myself have tried to get at the wealth of beauty in the literature of the European languages. When I was young I tried to approach Dante, unfortunately through a translation. I failed utterly, and felt it my pious duty to desist. Dante remained a closed book to me.

I also wanted to know German literature and, by reading Heine in translation, I thought I had caught a glimpse of the beauty there. Fortunately I met a missionary lady from Germany and asked her help. I worked hard for some months, but being rather quick-witted, which is not a good quality, I was not persevering. I had the dangerous facility which helps one to guess the meaning too easily. My teacher thought I had almost mastered the language,—which was not true. I succeeded, however, in getting through Heine, like a man walking in sleep crossing unknown paths with ease, and I found immense pleasure.

Then I tried Goethe. But that was too ambitious. With the help of the little German I had learnt, I did go through Faust. I believe I found my entrance to the palace, not like one who has keys for all the doors, but as a casual visitor who is tolerated in some general guest room, comfortable but not intimate. Properly speaking, I do not know my Goethe, and in the same way many other great luminaries are dark to me.

This is as it should be. Man cannot reach the shrine, if he does not make the pilgrimage. So, you

must not hope to find anything true from my own language in translation. You must come in person to woo her, win her heart and discover her beauty. You are trying to believe upon inadequate evidence that I am a poet. Your faith is therefore dim, and you are collecting easy and external proofs to give it strength. I am gratified to hear from you that you are convinced that I am a poet because I have a beautiful grey beard. But my vanity will remain unsatisfied until you know me from my voice that is in my poems.

I hope that this may make you want to learn Bengali some day. I hope yonder rival poet, taking notes opposite me, will consider this seriously. I will admit him into my class and help him so far as I am able. Now I must also let you know something of our 'Art movement.

It was started by my nephew 'Abanindranath', and is full of promise. If my friend, Nandalal, over there, who is a great artist, would deign to speak he would let you know how it is growing in vitality and how its influence is spreading far and wide.

In regard to music, I claim to be something of a musician myself. I have composed many songs which have defied the canons of respectable ortho-

doxy and good people are disgusted at the impudence of a man who is audacious only because he is untrained. But I persist, and God forgives me because I do not know what I do. Possibly that is the best way of doing things in the sphere of art. For I find that people blame me, but also sing my songs, even if not always correctly.

Please do not think I am vain. I can judge myself objectively and can openly express admiration for my own work, because I am modest. I do not hesitate to say that my songs have found their place in the heart of my land, along with her flowers that are never exhausted, and that the folk of the future, in days of joy or sorrow or festival, will have to sing them. This too is the work of a revolutionist.

III

I have been given to understand that China never felt the need of religion. [This I find hard to believe. People very often judge their neighbour's religion from their own narrow sectarian definition. I am sure that if it had been my good fortune to stay longer I should have been able to realise those deeper chords in the heart of China, whence the music of

the spirit comes. But my visit has been short and unfortunately interrupted with engagements that have prevented me from coming into a close personal touch with the people who in the simplicity of their mind keep alive their country's tradition.

I have been asked to let you know something about my own view of religion. One of the reasons why I always feel reluctant to speak about this is that I have not come to my own religion through the portals of passive acceptance of a particular creed owing to some accident of birth. I was born to a family who were pioneers in the revival in our country of a great religion, based upon the utterance of Indian sages in the Upanishads. But, owing to my idiosyncrasy of temperament, it was impossible for me to accept any religious teaching on the only ground that people in my surroundings believed it to be true. I could not persuade myself to imagine that I had a religion simply because everybody whom I might trust believed in its value.

Thus my mind was brought up in an atmosphere of freedom, freedom from the dominance of any creed that had its sanction in the definite authority of some scripture, or in the teaching of some organised body of worshippers. And therefore,

when I am questioned about religion, I have no prepared ground on which to take my stand, no training in a systematic approach to the subject.

Since my arrival in China, only once have I been asked to give justification for my religious faith. Some university student wanted from me the arguments upon which I based my belief in God. I did try to give him my arguments, but I must confess that arguments are wholly different from realisation, as is the perception of light from the theory of light. If my arguments go wrong that does not nullify the truth of my spiritual faith, for the evidence of its reality is in vision and not in logic. And therefore the man who questions me has every right to distrust my vision and reject my testimony. In such case, the authority of some particular book venerated by a large number of men may have greater weight than the assertion of an individual, and therefore I never claim any right to preach, and never consider myself a preceptor of men in the path of religion.

My religion essentially is a poet's religion. Its touch comes to me through the same unseen and trackless channels as does the inspiration of my music. My religious life has followed the same

mysterious line of growth as has my poetical life. Somehow they are wedded to each other, and though their betrothal had a long period of ceremony, it was kept secret from me. Then suddenly came a day when their union was revealed to me.

At that time I was living in a village. The day came with all its drifting trivialities of the usual commonplace. The ordinary work of my morning had come to its close and before going to take my bath I stood for a moment at my window, overlooking a market place on the bank of a dry river bed. Suddenly I became conscious of a stirring of soul within me. My world of experience in a moment seemed to become lighted, and facts that were detached and dim found a great unity of meaning. The feeling which I had was like what a man, groping through a fog without knowing his destination, might feel when he suddenly discovers that he stands before his own house.

I remember the day in my childhood when, after the painful process of learning my Bengali alphabet, I unexpectedly came to the first simple combination of letters which gave me the words: "It rains, the leaves tremble." I was thrilled with the delight of the picture which these words suggest-

ed to me. The unmeaning fragments lost their individual isolation and my mind revelled in the unity of a vision. In a similar manner, on that morning in the village, the facts of my life suddenly appeared to me in a luminous unity of truth. All things that had seemed like vagrant waves were revealed to my mind in relation to a boundless sea. From that time I have been able to maintain the faith that, in all my experience of nature or man, there is the fundamental truth of spiritual reality.

You will understand me if I tell you how unconsciously I had been travelling towards the realisation which I stumbled upon that day. I hope you will excuse me and not think that I am boasting when I confess to my gift of poesy, an instrument of expression delicately responsive to the breath that comes from depth of feeling. From my infancy I had the keen sensitiveness which always kept my mind tingling with consciousness of the world around me, natural and human.

We had a small garden attached to our house; it was a fairy land to me, where miracles of beauty were of everyday occurrence. Almost every morning in the early hour of the dusk, I would run out from my bed in a hurry to greet the first pink flush

of the dawn through the trembling leaves of the cocoanut trees which stood in a line along the garden boundary, while the grass glistened as the dew-drops caught the first tremor of the morning breeze. The sky seemed to bring to me the call of a personal companionship, and all my heart, my whole body in fact, used to drink in at a draught the overflowing light and peace of those silent hours. I was anxious never to miss a single morning, because each one was precious to me, more precious than gold to the miser.

I had been blessed with that sense of wonder which gives a child his right of entry into the treasure house of mystery which is in the heart of existence. I neglected my studies because they rudely summoned me away from the world around me, which was my friend and my companion, and when I was thirteen I freed myself from the clutch of an educational system that tried to keep me imprisoned within the stone walls of lessons.

This perhaps will explain to you the meaning of my religion. This world was living to me, intimately close to my life. I still remember the shock of repulsion I received when some medical student brought to me a piece of human windpipe and tried

to excite my admiration for its structure. He tried to convince me that it was the source of the beautiful human voice and I rejected that information with an intense disgust. I did not want to admire the skill of the workman, but rather to revel in the joy of the artist who concealed the machinery and revealed his creation in its ineffable unity.

God does not care to keep exposed the record of his power written in geological inscriptions, but he is proudly glad of the expression of beauty which He spreads on the green grass, in the flowers, in the play of colours on the clouds, in the murmuring music of running water.

I had a vague notion as to who or what it was that touched my heart's chords, like the infant which does not know its mother's name, or who and what she is. The feeling which I always had was a deep satisfaction of personality that flowed into my nature through living channels of communication from all sides.

It was a great thing for me that my consciousness was never dull about the facts of the surrounding world. That the cloud was the cloud, that a flower was a flower, was enough, because they directly spoke to me, because I could not be indiffer-

ent to them. I still remember the very moment, one afternoon, when coming back from school I alighted from the carriage and suddenly saw in the sky, behind the upper terrace of our house, an exuberance of 'deep dark' rain clouds lavishing rich cool shadows on the atmosphere. The marvel of it, the very generosity of its presence, gave me a joy which was freedom, the freedom we feel in the love of our 'dear friend'.

There is an illustration I have made use of in another paper, in which I supposed that a stranger from some other planet has paid a visit to our earth and happens to hear the sound of a human voice on the gramophone. 'All that is obvious to him, and most seemingly active, is the revolving disk; he is unable to 'discover the personal truth that lies behind, and so might accept the impersonal scientific fact of the 'disk as final,—the fact that could be touched and measured. He would wonder how it could be possible for a machine to speak to the soul. Then, if in pursuing the mystery, he should suddenly come to the heart of the music through a meeting with the composer, he would at once understand the meaning of that music as a personal communication.

That which merely gives us information can be

explained in terms of measurement, but that which gives us joy cannot be explained by the facts of a mere grouping of atoms and molecules. Somewhere in the arrangement of this world there seems to be a great concern about giving us delight, which shows that, in the universe, over and above the meaning of matter and force, there is a message conveyed through the magic touch of personality. This touch can not be analysed, it can only be felt. We can not prove it any more than the man from the other planet could prove to the satisfaction of his fellows the personality which remained invisible, but which, through the machinery, spoke direct to the heart.

Is it merely because the rose is round and pink that it gives me more satisfaction than the gold which could buy me the necessities of life, or any number of slaves? You may, at the outset, deny the truth that a rose gives more delight than a piece of gold. But you must remember that I am not speaking of artificial values. If we had to cross a desert whose sand was made of gold, then the cruel glitter of these dead particles would become a terror for us, and the sight of a rose would bring to us the music of paradise.

The final meaning of the 'delight which we find in a rose can never be in the roundness of its petals, just as the final meaning of the joy of music can not be in a gramophone disk. Somehow we feel that through a rose the language of love reaches our heart. Do we not carry a rose to our beloved because in it is already embodied a message which unlike our language of words cannot be analysed? Through this gift of a rose we utilise a universal language of joy for our own purposes of expression.

In India the Vaishnava religion is a religion of symbolism in which the Supreme Lover has his flute which with its different stops gives out the different notes of beauty that are in nature and in man. These notes bring to us our message of invitation. They eternally urge us to come out from the seclusion of our self-centred life into the realm of love and truth. 'Are we deaf by nature? Or is it that we have been deafened by the claims of the world of self-seeking, by the clamorous noise of the market place? We miss the voice of the Lover and we fight, we rob, we exploit the weak, we chuckle at our cleverness when we can appropriate for our use what is due to others, we make our life a desert by turning away from our world that stream of love which pours

down from the blue sky and wells up from the bosom of the earth.

In this region of reality, by unlocking the secret doors of the workshop department, you may come to that dark hall where dwells the Mechanic and help yourselves to attain usefulness, but through it you will never attain finality. Here is the storehouse of innumerable facts, and however necessary they may be, they have not the treasure of fulfilment in them. But the hall of union is there where dwells the Lover in the heart of existence. When you reach it you at once realise that you have come to Truth, to immortality and you are glad with a gladness which is an end, and yet which has no end.

Mere information of facts, mere discovery of power, belongs to the outside and not to the inner soul of things. Gladness is the one criterion of truth and we know when we have touched Truth by the music it gives, by the joy of the greeting it sends forth to the truth in us. That is the true foundation of all religions, it is not in dogma. As I have said before it is not as ether waves that we receive our light : the morning does not wait for some scientist for its introduction to us. In the same way, we touch the infinite reality immediately within us only

when we perceive the pure truth of love or goodness, not through the explanation of theologians, not through the erudite discussion of ethical doctrines.

I have already confessed to you that my religion is a poet's religion; all that I feel about it, is from vision and not from knowledge. I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer your questions about evil, or about what happens after death. And yet I am sure that there have come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy. It has been said in our Upanishads that our mind and our words come away baffled from the supreme Truth, but he who knows That, through the immediate joy of his own soul, is saved from all doubts and fears.

In the night we stumble over things and become acutely conscious of their individual separateness, but the day reveals the great unity which embraces them. And the man, whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness, at once realises the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences of race and his mind no longer awkwardly stumbles over individual facts of separateness in the human world, accepting them as final; he

realises that peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth, and not in any outer adjustments; that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

TO MY HOSTS

I

It is a day of rejoicing for me that I, who belong to a distant part of Asia, should be invited to this land of yours.

I shall make a confession. When I had your invitation I felt nervous; I asked myself: "What do these people expect when they invite me to their country?"

Before Christmas I had been debating this and putting off the date of my departure, partly because I was unwell, but also, quite frankly, because I could not make up my mind. In the meantime, Spring broke out in my own land.

A sense of compulsion had been urging me to sit down and prepare my lectures. Having to write in a language not my own, this preparation was necessary for me and took time. But Spring came, the poet heard its call, and I was lured from what I thought was my duty. Songs came in such profusion, like blossoms in spring that I had no time for duty and went on writing my poems and composing my songs.

Yet I could not get rid of the trouble in my heart. How was I to stand before my friends in China, after idling away my time doing nothing, or what was perhaps even worse, singing songs? But surely you don't expect fulfilling of engagements from poets. They are for capturing on their instruments the secret stir of life in the air and giving it voice in the music of prophecy.

Yet, a poet's help is needed at the time of awakening, for only he dares proclaim that, without our knowing it, the ice has given way; that the winter which had its narrow boundaries, its chains of ice, inhospitable and coldly tyrannical, is gone. The world has for long been in its grip,—the exclusive winter that keeps the human races within closed doors. But the doors are going to open. Spring has come.

I had my faith, then, that you would understand my idling, my defiance of duty. And it came to my mind: Is it not the same thing, your invitation and this invitation of the Spring breeze, which was never ignored by your own wayward poets who forgot their duty over the wine-cup? I too had to break my engagements, to lose your respect,—and thereby win your love. In other continents they are

hard taskmasters; they insist on every pound of flesh; and there, for the sake of self-preservation, I would have done my duty and forgotten my muse.

I say that a poet's mission is to attract the voice which is yet inaudible in the air; to inspire faith in the dream which is unfulfilled; to bring the earliest tidings of the unborn flower to a sceptic world.

So many are there to-day who do not believe. They do not know that faith in a great future itself creates that future; that without faith you cannot recognise your opportunities. Prudent men and unbelievers have created dissensions, but it is the eternal child, the dreamer, the man of simple faith, who has built up great civilisations. This creative genius, as you will see in your own past history, had faith which acknowledged no limits. The modern sceptic, who is ever critical, can produce nothing whatever,—he can only destroy.

Let us then be glad with a certainty of faith that we are born to this age when the nations are coming together. This bloodshed and misery cannot go on for ever, because, as human beings, we can never find our souls in turmoil and competition. There are signs that the new age has arrived. That you have asked me to come to you is one of them.

For centuries you have had merchants and soldiers and other guests, but, till this moment, you never thought of asking a poet. Is not this a great fact,—not your recognition of my personality, but the homage you thus pay to the springtime of a new age? Do not, then, ask for a message from me. People use pigeons to carry messages; and, in the war time, men valued their wings not to watch them soar, but because they helped to kill. Do not make use of a poet to carry messages!

Permit me, rather, to share your hope in the stirring of life over this land and I shall join in your rejoicing. I am not a philosopher: therefore keep for me room in your heart, not a seat on the public platform. I want to win your heart, now that I am close to you, with the faith that is in me of a great future for you, and for Asia, when your country rises and gives expression to its own spirit,—a future in the joy of which we shall all share.

Amongst you my mind feels not the least apprehension of any undue sense of race feeling, or difference of tradition. I am rather reminded of the day when India claimed you as brothers and sent you her love. That relationship is, I hope, still there, hidden in the heart of all of us,—the people

of the East. The path to it may be overgrown with the grass of centuries, but we shall find traces of it still.

When you have succeeded in recalling all the things achieved in spite of insuperable difficulties, I hope that some great dreamer will spring from among you and preach a message of love and, therewith overcoming all differences bridge the chasm of passions which has been widening for ages. Age after age, in Asia great dreamers have made the world sweet with showers of their love. Asia is again waiting for such dreamers to come and carry on the work, not of fighting, not of profit-making, but of establishing bonds of spiritual relationship.

The time is at hand when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light that radiates through the storm-clouds of trouble and illuminates the path of life.

II

You have a temple near by where there is a picture, carved upon the rock, of an Indian monk or sage who came to this country centuries ago.

What is most interesting about him is the fact that when he came here he felt that these hills were just like the hills with which he was familiar in his own motherland. It is said that this hill came flying from India to this place. But the real fact is that the hill which he had known in his own country had a Sanskrit name meaning the Vulture Peak. When he saw a hill here so like the one he had loved in India, he felt a great delight and gave it the same name.

When I came, I too saw your beautiful lake and the hills around. They did not seem at all strange, for your hills speak the same language as ours, your lake has the same smile as our lakes, your trees the same physiognomy, with only a slight difference, as our Indian trees. Therefore when I find myself in the heart of nature here, I realise the unity of different countries in their outer aspect.

Then it comes to me with sadness that, as human beings, we have no common language through which we can come close to one another. This perhaps has its advantages; for it makes us pay the price of knowing each other; we begin as strangers and have to win each other's love by strenuous endeavour. The function of true love is

to overcome the multitude of obstacles in the way, to spread its sway in spite of them.

This man who, centuries ago, came to this land, not only discovered a resemblance between the hills here and those of his own land, but found his unity of heart with the people of this country. In one of the pictures a Chinese is offering him food,—a most beautiful piece of symbolism. I am a descendant of the same ancestors from whom he came. I also claim the food of human kindness from your hands.

I know that many of you do not understand me, but something has drawn you to come and look at me. It is not because you expect any message from me, but, as I believe, because of some memory of that glorious time when India did send her messengers of love to this land,—not her merchants nor her soldiers, but the best of her children,—and they came bearing her gifts across deserts and seas.

This was the great task of India in the past, the task of building paths over obstacles. Men, at their highest, are pathmakers, paths not for profit or for power, but paths over which the hearts of men can go out to their brothers of different lands. To-day the time has arrived when human beings by some chance have found it easy to come closer physi-

cally. But because of the very ease of such external contact it has become really difficult for human races to know each other truly or deeply.

Most of us now-a-days are tourists,—we come and see only the surface of life. The difficulty has become all the greater because civilisation has produced shells which we carry around with us. Even in distant countries we find food to which we are accustomed; rooms filled with comfort,—the comfort which barricades us from the people of the country. We enter big hotels and disappear from the land to which we have come. We come for some purpose or other through the mist of which we see but dimly, and we do not see right through.

The man from India who lived and died here, in the midst of those who gathered to accept the gift he had brought, came, not with a sense of race superiority, or of the superiority of his religion, but through an exuberance of love which made him leave his own land. Unimaginable difficulties and discomforts he must have experienced, and a strangeness of life that we do not feel to-day. Science has made it easy for nations to come closer, but it has also made it easy for us to kill, to exploit, not to know each other, and yet to make-believe that we know.

The fact of our closer neighbourhood thus remains an external fact of which mankind has no cause to be proud. It always causes evil when we come nearer each other and yet do not establish close relations. We form a crowd, but not a community. The time has come when we must do our best to wipe out this shame from which the whole human race is suffering.

My friends, I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communion which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion its lines can still be traced. I shall consider myself fortunate if, through this visit, China comes nearer to India and India to China,—for no political or commercial purpose, but for disinterested human love and for nothing else.

It is not at all difficult for me to know the beauty of your lake and your hills, why then should it be difficult for me to know you yourselves? Being a man I want to know you as men, not with a view to improve your minds or your morals. When we realise this unity, which is natural only when it is for no ulterior purpose either good or bad, then all the misunderstanding in the human world will be removed. I ask your help to make it easy

for us. We in India are a 'defeated' race; we have no power, political, military or commercial; we do not know how to help or to injure you materially. But, fortunately, we can meet you as your guests, your brothers and your friends; let that happen.

I invite you to us as you have invited me. I do not know whether you have heard of the institution I have established in my own land. Its one object is to let India welcome the world to its heart. Let what seems to be a barrier become a path and let us unite, not in spite of our 'differences, but through them. For 'differences can never be wiped away, and life would be so much the poorer without them. Let all human races keep their own personalities, and yet come together, not in a uniformity that is 'dead, but in a unity that is living.

III

I had my invitation to 'America some years ago. On my way I stopped in Japan—Japan, proud with the prosperity of the most newly rich of nations. There it hurt me deeply that the East should not be humble when it had come into sudden good fortune. We ought to know that it is a dangerously critical

period in her history when a country is suddenly surprised with a political success that is stupendous. It is a difficult trial, requiring from her all the strength she has, in order to save herself from the dust-storm of arrogance that obliterates the path of wisdom.

Pride generates a blind trust in one's exclusive might, causing isolation and sowing seeds of its own destruction. It produces continual friction with our surroundings, gradually wearing out our armour of protection.

In Asia we must seek our strength in union, in an unwavering faith in righteousness, and never in the egotistic spirit of separateness and self-assertion. It is from the heart of the East that the utterance has sprung forth: "The meek shall inherit the earth." For the meek never waste energy in the display of insolence, but are firmly established in true prosperity through harmony with the All.

In Asia we must unite, not through some mechanical method of organisation, but through a spirit of true sympathy. The organised power of the machine is ready to smite and devour us, from which we must be rescued by that living power of spirit which grows into strength, not through mere

addition, but through organic assimilation. That we should borrow science from the West is right. We have a great thing to accept from the people of the West,—their treasure of intellect, which is immense and whose superiority we must acknowledge. But it would be degradation on our part, and an insult to our ancestors, if we forgot our own moral wealth of wisdom, which is of far greater value than a system that produces endless materials and a physical power that is always on the warpath.

I have keenly felt this great degradation and disaster that has overcome the world. Men's souls have become hypnotised and their knees are bent before idols—the idols of money and power. I have found in my travels that in a campaign against this organised cultivation of egoism, mere preaching is of no use. I came to the conclusion that what was needed was to develop and give form to some ideal of education, so that we might bring up our children in the atmosphere of a higher life.

For some time past education has lacked idealism in its mere exercise of an intellect which has no depth of sentiment. The one desire produced in the heart of the students has been an ambition to win wealth and power,—not to reach some inner

standard of perfection, not to obtain self-emancipation. Such an ideal is not worthy of human beings.

For the last century and a half, the cultured nations of the earth have given up their faith in a spiritual perfection of life. Their doom is upon them, and when we in the East become enamoured of the glamour of their success, we must know that the terrific glow we see upon the western horizon is not the glow of sunrise, or of a new birth-fire, but is a conflagration of passion. Of that, only those who have lost their mind, gazing at the sudden eruption of a flaming success, can be enamoured, as the victim is enamoured of the glittering serpent's eyes.

I say again that we must accept truth when it comes from the West and not hesitate to render it our tribute of admiration. Unless we accept it our civilisation will be one-sided, it will remain stagnant. Science gives us the power of reason, enabling us to be actively conscious of the worth of our own ideals.

We have been in need of this discovery to lead us out of the obscurity of dead habit, and for that we must turn to the living mind of the West with gratefulness, never encouraging the cultivation of

hatred against her. Moreover, the Western people also need our help, for our destinies are now inter-twined.

No one nation to-day can progress, if the others are left outside its boundaries. Let us try to win the heart of the West with all that is best and not base in us, and think of her and deal with her, not in revenge or contempt, but with goodwill and understanding, in a spirit of mutual respect.

Our institution of Visva-bharati represents this ideal of co-operation, of the spiritual unity of man. And I ask you, my brothers and sisters, to take part in building it, you who still have men among you mindful of the bond of love once established between our two peoples of the olden days.

IV

There was a time when Asia saved the world from barbarism. Then came the night, I do not know how. And when we were aroused from our stupor by the knocking at our gate, we were not prepared to receive Europe who came to us in her pride of strength and intellect. The West came, not to give of its best, or to seek for our best, but

to exploit us for the sake of material gain. It even came into our homes robbing us of our own. That is how Europe overcame Asia.

We did Europe injustice because we did not meet her on equal terms. The result was the relation of superior to inferior; of insult on the one side and humiliation on the other. We have been accepting things like beggars. We have been imagining that we have nothing of our own. We are still suffering from want of confidence in ourselves. We are not aware of our own treasures.

We must rise from our stupor, and prove that we are not beggars. This is our responsibility. Search in your own homes for things that are of undying worth. Then you will be saved and will be able to save all humanity. Some of us, of the East, think that we should copy and imitate the West. I do not believe in it. What the West has produced is for the West, being native to it. But we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to find our own birthright.

The West is becoming demoralized through being the exploiter, through tasting of the fruits of exploitation. We must fight with our faith in the

moral and spiritual power of men. We of the East have never revered death-dealing generals, nor lie-dealing diplomats, but spiritual leaders. Through them we shall be saved, or not at all. Physical power is not the strongest in the end. That power destroys itself. Machine guns and bomb-dropping aeroplanes crush living men under them, and the West is sinking to its dust. We are not going to follow the West in competition, in selfishness, in brutality.

Think of evolution. First the earth, then the animals. It was dark, then it was light. Then there came intellect, and physical life found its highest strength through mind. It extended its arms into weapons, enlarging the domain of physical power and Man became master over the other animals. But evolution did not stop here. There is another instinct also evolving in human beings which is not to gain, but to give up—the spirit of sacrifice.

The chicken within the egg has rudimentary wings, rudimentary eye-sight and legs. These are of no use while the chick is still in its shell. But some chicks, let us suppose, even while there, might feel that there must be a realm beyond where they can make full use of their potential faculties. Other

chicks, again, being rationalists or logicians, might argue that there was no life beyond the shell. Human beings are likewise divided into those who have faith in the life beyond the shell, and those who have not; those who believe that we have faculties which are not to be accounted for by the intellect alone, and those who do not.

We live in a dusk. We cannot fully understand the outer world. We are within the shell. The loss entailed in breaking the shell, in self-sacrifice, is not an absolute loss,—the gain is far greater. All religions have dwelt upon this point of gaining by sacrifice. It has been the faith of great-hearted men. It is the faith in humanity, dependent upon faith in the soul. When we give ourselves, we gain ourselves.

The bees do nothing except accumulate honey. But man having soul is always searching into the beyond. He follows his instinct for ultimate truth,—for ultimate, not ulterior values. Our faith is in the infinite and in the region of the will we touch the infinite.

Truth is not to be confounded with fact. Evil instincts are mere facts which stand for negation. But facts have not the power to contradict truth, for

truth is the everlasting light of the spirit and overcomes them all. The final voice is not the voice of scepticism or of negation, but of faith, of love. Truth has won the heart of man. Otherwise the world would have long ago sunk into utter darkness. The thing to do is to serve the supreme truth of goodness, of beauty and of love.

Your civilization has been nurtured in its social life upon faith in the soul. You are the most long-lived race, because you have had centuries of wisdom nourished by your faith in goodness, not in mere strength. This has given your great past. You have come to listen to me because I speak of Asia, because I am proud of our continent, and I thank you for the welcome you have accorded me.

M

When I was first invited to come to China, I did not know if all of you wanted a man from India. I even heard some were opposed to my coming, because it might check your special modern enthusiasm for western progress and force. True, if you want a man who will help you in these things you have been mistaken in asking me. I have no help

to give you here you already have ten thousand able teachers go to them,

My warning is, that those who would have you rely on material force to make a strong nation, do not know history, or understand civilization either. Reliance on power is the characteristic of barbarism; nations that trusted to it have already been destroyed or have remained barbarous.

Other nations again, added intellect to physical force that it might teach how to acquire more power, and we can no more despise the science and material progress that has resulted than we can despise our own bodies; but still it is not that which makes, or has made, nations great; nations that have relied thereon have either been destroyed, or are even now reverting to barbarism.

It is co-operation and love, mutual trust and mutual aid which make for strength and real progress in civilization. New spiritual and moral power must continually be developed to enable men to assimilate their scientific gains, to control their new weapons and machines or these will dominate, enslave, and slay them.

Men have been losing their freedom, their humanity and their lives, to fit themselves for vast

mechanical organizations, scientific, political, economic, and military. We see to-day civilizations of vast power and great intellect veiling in a decent way mere cannibalism. It is the nemesis of Science dominant over, rather than subservient to, the spirit of man; for the world of mere science is not a world of reality, but an abstract impersonal world of force.

But many will point to the weakness of China and India and tell you that thrown, as we are, among these strong and progressive peoples, it is necessary to emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction. And I would not have you deceived by the Sunday-school talk that no advantage is to be won by unrighteousness. In the words of the great ones of my people :

*With the help of unrighteousness men do prosper.
With the help of unrighteousness men do gain
victories over their enemies.*

*With the help of unrighteousness men do attain what
they desire.*

But they perish at the root.

We have seen victories won by diplomacy and brute force, but there are signs in the civilizations founded on diplomatic lies and blind material strength that even now their doom is on them. Lies

do prosper for a while, but the true life dies at the root.

You may rely on this prosperity and power of to-day, but there is to-morrow. This to-day is burdened with lies and oppressions, it is overburdened, it is sinking. I defy to-day and refuse to let it dominate my purposes. I rely on to-morrow with peace and faith. How do I prove it? I have no proof outside myself, but I have it in the depth of my soul. Even at the cost of martyrdom and insult and suffering we must continue to believe in peace and love and kindness and idealism. What is the value of success if it be at the cost of humanity and if it make a desert of God's world?

I speak to you as a member of a nation that has gone under in the race for progress, and I tell you that I am ready to accept weakness and insult and oppression of the body, but I will never acknowledge the defeat, the last insult, the utter ruin, of my spirit being conquered, so that I am made to lose my faith and purpose.

My enemies may dominate and slay my body, but they cannot make me adopt their methods, or hate them. The devil helps in the sphere in which

he is master, but we must reject such aid if we want to save our life from utter destruction. Seek righteousness even though success be lost.

I believe this, not through the evidence of facts. Facts mislead and oppress you with mere numbers and quantity; but the world of personality surpasses facts on every side. Truth comes from above, is conscious of infinity and is creative. We have accepted and followed and venerated men who gave us such truth, and lost success. We need to hear this again and again and never more than now in this modern world of slavery and cannibalism in decent guise :

By the help of unrighteousness men 'do prosper, men 'do gain victories over their enemies, men 'do attain what they desire; but they perish at the root.

TO STUDENTS

I

When I was very young I gave up learning, and ran away from my lessons. That saved me, and I owe all that I possess to-day to that courageous step taken when I was young. I fled the classes which gave me instruction, but which did not inspire. One thing I have gained, a sensitivity of mind to the touch of life and of nature, who speak to me.

It is a great world to which we have been born, and if I had cultivated a callousness of mind, if I had smothered this sense of touch under a pile upon pile of books, I should have lost the whole world. We can ignore what is scattered in the blue of the sky, in the basket of flowers from the seasons, in the delicate relationships of love, of sympathy and of mutual friendship, only if we have killed and smothered the sensitiveness that thrills us when we come into touch with reality, the reality which is everywhere in this great world, in man, in nature, in everything. This sensitiveness I kept.

If mother Nature could do it, she would crown me, she would bless me, she would kiss me. She would say, "You have loved me." I have lived in this great world not as a member of a society or of a group, but as a scamp, as a vagabond, and yet free in the heart of the world, which I have seen face to face. I have lived into the mystery of its being, of its heart and soul. You may call me uneducated, uncultured just a foolish poet; you may grow great as scholars and philosophers; and yet I think I would still retain the right to laugh at your pedant scholarship.

I know, really, that you do not despise me, because I know less of mathematics than you; for you believe that I have come to the secret of existence in some other way,—not through analysis, but as the mother's chamber can be approached by a child. I had kept the spirit of the child fresh within me; because of this I have found entry to my mother's chamber wherein a symphony of awakening light sang to me from the distant horizon, in response to which I also sing; because of this I stand close to you, the young hearts of a foreign country whom my heart recognises as it's fellow voyagers in the path of dreamland.

II

You who are young do not need any props of ready-made maxims, or pruning hooks of prohibition, no doctrines from the dead leaves of books, for the guidance of your conscience. Your soul has its natural yearning for the inspiration of the sunlight of joy and spring of life, for all that secretly helps the seed to sprout and the bud to blossom.

You are here with the gift of your young life which, like the morning star, shines with hope for the unborn day of your country's future. I am here to sing the hymn of praise to youth, I who am your poet, the poet of youth.

You know that fairy tale,—the eternal story of youth,—which is current in almost all parts of the world. It is about the beautiful princess taken captive by some cruel giant and the young prince who starts out to free her from his dungeon. When we heard that story in our boyhood, can you not remember how our enthusiasm was stirred, how we felt ourselves setting out in the guise of that prince and rescuing the princess, overcoming all obstacles and dangers, and at last succeeded in bringing her back to freedom. To-day the human soul is lying

captive in the dungeon of Giant Machine, and I ask you, my young princes, to feel this enthusiasm in your hearts and to be willing to rescue the human soul from the grip of greed which keeps it chained.

We travelled up from Shanghai to this town along your great river, Yang Tse. All through the night I often came out from my bed to watch the beautiful scene on the banks, the sleeping cottages with their solitary lamps, the silence spreading over the hills, dim with mist. When morning broke what was my delight to find fleets of boats coming down the river,—their sails stretching high into the air, a picture of life's activity with its perfect grace of freedom. It moved my heart deeply. I felt that my own sail had caught the wind, and was carrying me from my captivity, from the sleeping past, bringing me out into the great world of man.

It brought to my mind the different stages in the history of Man's progress.

In the night each village was self-centred, each cottage stood bound by the chain of unconsciousness. I knew, as I gazed on the scene, that vague dreams were floating about in this atmosphere of sleeping souls, but what struck my mind more forcibly was the fact that when men are asleep they

are shut up within the very narrow limits of their own individual lives. The lamps exclusively belonged to the cottages, which in their darkness were in perfect isolation. Perhaps, though I could not see them, some prowling bands of thieves were the only persons awake, ready to exploit the weakness of those who were asleep.

When daylight breaks we are free from the enclosure and the exclusiveness of our individual life. It is then that we see the light which is for all men and for all times. It is then that we come to know each other and come to co-operate in the field of life. This was the message that was brought in the morning by the swiftly moving boats. It was the freedom of life in their outspread sails that spoke to me; and I felt glad. I hoped and prayed that morning had truly come in the human world and that the light had broken forth.

This age to which we belong, does it not still represent night in the human world, a world asleep, whilst individual races are shut up within their own limits, calling themselves nations, which barricade themselves, as these sleeping cottages were barricaded, with shut doors, with bolts and bars, with prohibitions of all kinds? Does not all this repre-

sent the dark age of civilization, and have we not begun to realize that it is the robbers who are out and awake? The light of the torches, which these men hold high, is not the light of civilization, but only points to the path of exploitation.

This age, that still persists, must be described as the darkest age in human civilization. But I do not despair. As the early bird, even while the dawn is yet dark, sings out and proclaims the rising of the sun, so my heart sings to proclaim the coming of a great future which is already close upon us. We must be ready to welcome this new age. There are some people, who are proud and wise and practical, who say that it is not in human nature to be generous, that men will always fight one another, that the strong will conquer the weak, and that there can be no real moral foundation for man's civilisation. We cannot deny the facts of their assertion: the strong have power in the human world: but I refuse to accept this as a revelation of truth.

I bring to your mind those early days when nature produced huge monsters. Who in those days, could dare to believe that they were doomed? Then happened a miracle. All of a sudden, in the midst of that orgy of bigness and physical strength,

appeared Man, without weapons and without protection, naked, small and tender of skin. He discovered the full power of his intellect and stood up against the might of muscle with weapons shaped by his mind, and he held his own and survived.

But the true victory of man's life was not fulfilled even then. For to-day his descendants, half brute and half man, have risen up all over the world in terrible form, more devastating even than those pre-historic monsters who, at their worst, were frankly physical. This combination of brute and intellect has given rise to a terror which is stupid in its passion and yet cunning in its weapons; it is blindness made efficient and, therefore, more destructive than all other forces in the world.

We in the East had once tried our best to muzzle the brute in man and to control its ferocity. But to-day the titanic forces of intellect have overwhelmed our belief in spiritual and moral power. Power in the animals was, at least, in harmony with life, but not so are bombs, poison gases, and murderous aeroplanes, the horrible weapons supplied by science.

We should know this, that Truth,—any truth that man acquires,—is for all. Money and property

belong to individuals, to each of you, but you must never exploit truth for your personal aggrandisement—that would be selling God's blessing to make profit. Science also is truth. It has its own place, in the healing of the sick, and in the giving of more food, more leisure for life. But when it helps the strong to crush the weaker, to rob those who are asleep, that is using truth for impious ends and those who are so sacrilegious will suffer and be punished, for their own weapons will be turned against them.

But a new time has come, the time to discover another great power, the power that gives us strength to suffer and not merely to cause suffering, the immense power of sacrifice. This will help us to defeat the malevolent intellect of brute greed and egotism, as in the pre-historic age intelligence overcame the power of mere muscle.

Let the morning of this new age dawn in the East, from which great streams of idealism have sprung in the past, making the fields of life fertile with their influence. I appeal to you to make trial of this moral power through martyrdom. Prove how, through the heroism of suffering and sacrifice,—not weak submission,—we can demonstrate our best wealth and strength. Know that no organiza-

tion however big can help you, no league of prudence or of power, but only the individual with faith in the infinite, the invisible, the incorruptible, the fearless.

The great human societies are the creation not of profiteers, but of dreamers. The millionaires, who produce their bales of merchandise in enormous quantities, have never yet built a great civilization. It is they who are about to destroy what others have built. Come to the rescue and free the human soul from the dungeon of the Machine. Proclaim the Spirit of Man and prove that it lies not in machine-guns and cleverness, but in a simple faith.

III

My young friends, I gaze at your young faces, beaming with intelligence and eager interest across the distance of age. I am approaching the shore of the sunset-land. You stand over there with the rising sun. My heart reaches out to your heart and blesses them.

I envy you. When I was a boy, in the dusk of the waning night, we did not fully know to what a great age we had been born. The meaning and

message of that great age has become clear to-day. I believe there are individuals all over the world this moment who have heard its call.

What a delight it may be for you, and what a responsibility, this belonging to a period which is one of the greatest in the whole history of man! We realise the greatness of this age dimly, in the light of this glowing fire of pain, in the suffering that has come upon us, a suffering that is world-wide; we do not even know fully what form it is going to take.

The seed, in which life remains self-contained, does not know its complete truth. Even when the sheath bursts, it is not known in what shape its life will manifest itself, what fruit the branches will bear.

In human history, though the forces of creation work oftenest in the dark, it is the privilege of man to give them direction, and thus to take part in the development of his own destiny. The sheath of the present age has burst. It lies in you, in each one of you, to give this new-born life the impulse of growth.

Now I am in China, I ask you, I ask myself, what have you got, what out of your own house can

you offer in homage to this new age? You must answer this question. Do you know your own mind? Your own culture? What is best and most permanent in your own history? You must know at least that, if you are to save yourselves from the greatest of insults, the insult of obscurity, of rejection. Bring out your light and add it to this great festival of lamps of world culture.

I have heard it said,—some among your own people say it,—that you are pragmatic and materialistic; that you cling to this life and this world; that you do not send out your dreams searching the distant heavens for a far-away life beyond.

I cannot, however, bring myself to believe that any nation in this world can be great and yet be materialistic. I have a belief that no people in Asia can be wholly given to materialism. There is something in the blue vault of its sky, in the golden rays of its sun, in the wide expanse of its starlit night, in the procession of its seasons, each bringing its own basket of flowers, which somehow gives to us an understanding of the inner music of existence, and I can see that you are not deaf to it.

Materialism is exclusive, and those who are materialistic claim their individual rights of enjoy-

ment, of storing and possessing. You are not individualists in China. Your society is itself the creation of your communal soul. It is not the outcome of a materialistic, of an egoistic mind,—a medley of unrestricted competition, which refuses to recognise its obligations to others.

I see that you in China have not developed the prevailing malady of the world, the lunacy of an unmeaning multiplication of millions, the production of those strange creatures called multi-millionaires. I have heard that, unlike others, you do not give great value to the brute power of militarism. All this could not be possible if you were really materialists.

It is true that you love this world and the material things about you with an intensity of attachment, but not by enclosing your possessions within the walls of exclusiveness. You share your wealth, you make of your distant relatives your guests, and you are not inordinately rich. This is only possible because you are not materialistic.

I have travelled through your country and I have seen with what immense care you have made the earth fruitful, with what a wonderful perfection you have endowed the things of every day use. How

could this have been possible through a greedy attachment to material things?

If you had acknowledged greed as your patron, then, at a touch, mere utility would have withered away all the beauty and the grace of your environment. Have you not seen this? In Shanghai, in Tientsin,—huge demons of ugliness that stalk all over the world,—in New York, London, Calcutta, Singapore and Honkong, all big with ugliness? Everything that they touch becomes dead, denuded of grace as if God's blessing had been withdrawn. Of this your Peking shows no sign, but rather reveals a marvellous beauty of human association. Even the most ordinary shops here have their simple decoration. This shows that you have loved your life. Love gives beauty to everything it touches. Not greed and utility : they produce offices, but not dwelling houses.

To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them, this is a great service. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not live in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own by some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul.

From your own experience you can see the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable; and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.

Gross utility kills beauty. We have now all over the world a huge production of things, huge organisations, huge administrations of empire, obstructing the path of life. Civilisation is waiting for a great consummation, for an expression of its soul in beauty. This must be your contribution to the world.

What is it that you have done by making things beautiful? You have made, for me who come from a distant country, even your things hospitable by touching them with beauty. Instead of finding them an obstacle in my way, I acknowledge them as my own, because my soul delights in their beauty. With its mere piles of things, life in other countries has become like some royal grave of ancient Egypt. Those things darkly shout "Keep away." When I find in your country this attractiveness in the things of every day use, they offer no repulse, but send out their invitation: "Come and accept us."

Are you going to forget the obligations of your great gift, to let this genius for turning everything

to beauty go to waste, to kill it by letting in a flood of maleficence?

Deformity has already made its bed in your markets, it is fast encroaching upon the region of your heart, and of your admiration. Supposing you accept it as your permanent guest, supposing you succeed in doing this violence to yourselves, then indeed, in a generation or two, you will kill this great gift. What will remain? What will you offer humanity in return for your privilege to exist?

But you have not the temperament that will enable you to maintain ugliness. It is impossible for me to believe that.

You may say: "We want progress." Well, you did make wonderful progress in your past age; you devised great inventions, inventions that were borrowed and copied by other peoples. You did not lie idle and supine. And yet all that progress never encumbered your life with non-essentials.

Why should there remain for ever a gulf between progress and perfection? If you can bridge this gulf with the gift of beauty, you will do a great service to humanity.

It is your mission to prove that love for the earth, and for the things of the earth, is possible

without materialism,—love without a stain of greed. The man of greed is tied to his possessions with the rope of passion. That you are not so tied is shown by the trouble you take to bring things to their perfection.

You have instinctively grasped the secret of the rhythm of things,—not the secret of power which is in science, but the secret of expression. This is a great gift, for God alone knows this secret. Look at the miracle of expression in all the things of creation, the flowers, the stars, the blade of grass. You cannot analyse the secret of this elusive beauty in your laboratory. How fortunate you are!—you who possess it by instinct. It cannot be taught, but you can allow us to share its fruits with you.

Things that possess this quality of perfection belong to all humanity. Being beautiful they cannot be secured within closed doors,—that is a 'desecration which providence does not permit. If you have been successful in creating beauty, that in itself is hospitality, and I, a stranger, can find my home here in the heart of beauty.

I am tired and old. This is perhaps my last meeting with you. With all my heart I take this occasion to entreat you not to be turned away by the

call of vulgar strength, of stupendous size, by the spirit of storage, by the multiplication of millions, without meaning and without end.

Cherish the ideal of perfection, and to that, relate all your work, all your movements. Then, though you love the material things of earth, they will not hurt you and you will bring heaven to earth and soul into things.

TO TEACHERS

I

I have been told that you would like to hear of the educational mission I have taken up, but it will be difficult for me to give you a distinct idea of my institution which has grown gradually during the last twenty-four years. With it my own mind has grown and my own ideal of education has come to its fullness, so slowly, and so naturally, that I find it difficult now to analyse and put it before you.

The first question you may all ask is: what urged me to take up education. I had spent most of my time in literary pursuits till I was forty or more. I had never any desire to take part in practical work, because I had a rooted conviction in my mind that I had not the gift. Perhaps you know the truth, or shall I make a confession? When I was thirteen I finished going to school. I do not want to boast about it, I merely give it to you as a historical fact.

So long as I was forced to go to school, I felt its torture unbearable. I often used to count the years that must pass before I should find my freedom. My elder brothers had passed through their academic career and were engaged in life, each in his own way. How I used to envy them when, after a hurried meal in the morning, I found the inevitable carriage, that took us to school, ready at the gate. How I wished that, by some magic spell, I could cross the intervening fifteen or twenty years and suddenly become a grown-up man. I afterwards realised that what then weighed on my mind was the unnatural pressure of the system of education, which prevailed everywhere.

Children's minds are sensitive to the influences of the great world to which they have been born. Their subconscious mind is active, always imbibing some lesson, and with it realising the joy of knowing. This sensitive receptivity of their passive mind helps them, without their feeling any strain, to master language, that most complex and difficult instrument of expression, full of ideas that are undefinable and symbols that deal with abstractions. And through their natural gift of guessing they learn the meaning of words which we cannot explain. It may

be easy for a child to know what the word *water* means, but how difficult it must be for it to know what idea is associated with the simple word "yes-terday." Yet how easily do they overcome innumerable such difficulties owing to the extraordinary sensitiveness of their subconscious mind. Their introduction to this great world of reality is easy and joyful because of this.

But it is just at this critical period that the child's life is brought into the education factory,—lifeless, colourless, dissociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead. We are born with that God-given gift of taking delight in the world, but such delightful activity is fettered and imprisoned, stilled by a force called discipline which kills the sensitiveness of the child mind, the mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive first-hand knowledge from mother Nature. We sit inert, like dead specimens of some museum, whilst lessons are pelted at us from on high, like hail stones on flowers.

In our childhood we imbibe our lessons with the aid of our whole body and mind, with all the senses fully active and eager. When we are sent to school, the doors of natural information are closed

to us; our eyes see the letters, our ears hear the abstract lessons, but our mind misses the perpetual stream of ideas which come from the heart of nature, because the teachers in their wisdom think that these bring distraction, that they have no great purpose behind them.

When we accept any discipline for ourselves, we try to avoid taking in anything except what is necessary for our purpose; and it is this purposefulness, which belongs to the adult mind, that we force upon the children in school. We say, "Never keep your mind alert, attend to what is before you, what has been given you." This becomes a torture to the child because it goes against Nature's purpose, and Nature, the greatest of all teachers, is thwarted at every step by the human teacher who believes in machine-made lessons and not in lessons of life, so that the whole growth of the child's mind is not only hurt, but forcibly spoilt.

I believe that children should be surrounded with the things of Nature which have their own educational value. Their mind should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens in the life of to-day. The new to-morrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life.

This is the best method for the child. But what happens in a school is, that every day, at the same hour, the same book is brought and poured out for him. His attention is never hit by chance surprises from Nature.

Our grown-up mind is always full of the things we have to arrange and deal with, and therefore the things that happen around us,—the coming of morning, heralded by music and flowers,—leave no mark upon us. We do not allow them to, for our minds are already crowded; the stream of lessons perpetually flowing from the heart of Nature does not touch us, we merely choose those which are useful, rejecting the rest as undesirable because we want the shortest cut to success.

Children have no such distractions. With them every new fact or event comes to a mind that is always open, with an abundant hospitality; and, through this exuberant, indiscriminate acceptance, they learn innumerable facts within a very short time, amazing compared with our own slowness. These are most important lessons of life, which are thus learnt, and what is still more wonderful is, that the greater part of them are abstract truths.

The child learns so easily because it has a natural gift. But adults, because they are tyrants, ignore natural gifts and say that the children must learn through the same process as themselves. We insist upon forced mental feeding and our lessons become a form of torture. This is one of man's most cruel, most wasteful mistakes.

Because, when I was young, I underwent this process, and remembered the torture of it, I tried to found a school where the boys might be free in spite of the school.

Knowing something of the natural school which Nature herself supplies to all her creatures, I established my institution in a beautiful spot, far away from the town, where the children had the greatest freedom possible, in this above all, that I did not force upon them lessons for which their mind was unfitted. I do not want to exaggerate, and I must admit that I have not been able to follow my own plan in every way. Forced as we are to live in a society which is itself tyrannical, and which cannot always be gainsaid, I was often obliged to concede what I did not believe in, but what the others around me insisted on. But I always had it in my mind to create an atmosphere.

This I felt was more important than the teaching of the classroom.

The atmosphere was there all the time. How could I create it? The birds sing to the awakening of light in the morning, at night the stars bring peace, and the evening brings its own silence.

We have there the open beauty of the sky, and the different seasons revolve before our eyes in all the magnificence of their colour. Through this perfect touch with nature we took the opportunity of instituting festivals of the seasons. I wrote songs to celebrate the coming of spring and of the wonderful season of the rains which follow upon long months of drought. We had our dramatic performances with decorations in keeping with the seasons.

I invited renowned artists from the city to live at the school, leaving them free to produce their own work, which I allowed the boys and girls to watch if they so felt inclined. It was the same with my own work. All the time I was composing songs and poems, and would often invite the teachers round, to sing or read with them. This helped to create an atmosphere from which they could imbibe something impalpable, but life-giving.

I have spoken enough on this most important

aspect, but there is one more idea I have not yet mentioned,—the ideal of the age,—which must find its place in the centre of all education.

When races come together, as they have done in the present age, it should not be merely the gathering of a crowd. There must be some bond of relation, otherwise they will knock against one another.

Our education must enable every child to grasp and to fulfil this purpose of the age, not to defeat it by acquiring the habit of creating divisions, and of cherishing national prejudices. There are of course natural differences in human races which should be preserved and respected and the mission of our education should be to realise our unity in spite of them, to discover truth through the wilderness of their contradictions.

This we have tried to do in Visva-bharati. Our endeavour has been to include this ideal of unity in all the activities in our institution, some educational, some that comprise different kinds of artistic expression, some in the shape of service to our neighbours by way of helping the reconstruction of village life.

The children began to be of service to our neighbours, to help them in various ways and to be in

constant touch with the life around them. They had their own freedom to grow which is the greatest possible gift for the child life. There was also another kind of freedom at which we aimed, the freedom of sympathy with all humanity, a freedom from all racial and national prejudices.

The minds of children are usually shut inside prison houses, so that they become incapable of understanding other people with different languages and customs. This causes us, when our growing souls demand it, to grope after each other in darkness, to hurt each other in ignorance, to suffer from the worst form of blindness of this age. The missionaries themselves have contributed to this evil. In the name of brotherhood and in the arrogance of their sectarian pride they create misunderstanding. This they make permanent in their text-books and poison the minds of children. The worst of fetters come when children lose their freedom of mind.

I have tried to save the children from such vicious methods of alienating their minds and from other prejudices which are fostered through books, through histories, geographies and lessons full of national prejudices. In the East there is a great deal of bitter resentment against other races and in our own homes

we are often brought up in feelings of hatred. I have tried to save the children from such feelings with the help of friends from the West, who, with their understanding and their human sympathy and love, have done us a great service.

We are building up our institution upon the ideal of the spiritual unity of all races. I want to build it with the help of all other races, and when I was on the continent of Europe I appealed to the great scholars of the West, and I was fortunate enough to receive their help. They left their own places of learning, and came to this institution, which is poor in material things, and helped us to build it up.

I have in my mind not merely a University,—that is only one of the aspects of our Visva-bharati,—but the idea of a great meeting place for individuals from all countries where men who believe in our spiritual unity can come into human touch with their neighbours. Such idealists there are and when I travelled in the West, even in out of the way places, many unknown persons of no special reputation wanted to join this work.

It will be a great future when the human races have come closer to one another, when through their meeting new truths will be revealed, with-

out the stimulation of the baser passions within us.

There will be a new sunrise of truth and love through such insignificant people, who have suffered martyrdom for humanity like that great personality, who had only a handful of disciples from among the fisherfolk and who at the end of his career presented a miserable picture of utter failure at a time when Rome was at the zenith of her glory. He was reviled by those in power, ignored by the crowd, and he suffered an inglorious death; yet through the symbol of this utmost failure he lives for ever.

Such to-day are the martyrs who are sent to prison and persecuted, who are not men of power, but who belong to a deathless future.

LEAVE TAKING

I

The time for taking leave has come, leave from friends with whom I have lived and at whose hands I have received much kindness. I can not tell you how much I have felt at home with those who have taken the trouble to introduce me to this great land and its people. Yet I feel to-day a discontent, as of something not accomplished, as of my mission not completed. But it is not I who am to blame. The present age is the great obstacle.

I may tell you now that when my people heard I had received an invitation from China, there was great rejoicing and excitement amongst them. Most of you are aware that I have had, before this, other invitations from countries in the West, but this time the feeling of rejoicing was not restricted to that small circle which knows England,—it came from those who had no knowledge of England at all, and yet who were full of admiration at your generosity in inviting a man from the East, at a time when most people are infatuated with Western culture. They felt that this was a great opportunity

for us to reopen the ancient channel of spiritual communication once again.

Our simple minded people are not sophisticated. They know nothing of world affairs, they think it quite a simple matter for nations to come together, and rather feel that it is the building up of hostile relationships which requires the greatest amount of energy. Some will smile at such credulity of theirs.

“ Sir, do speak to the people of China, for we can never forget the relationship which was established in those distant ages,”—that was their charge to me. It is a great fact that they should feel thus. They thought it absolutely easy for me to let you, through the length and breadth of China, know how we in India have a love for you, and how we long to be the recipients of your love. They did not know that times were hard, and that there might be insurmountable difficulties. In the simplicity of their hearts they thought it possible for me, one individual, to bind together the hearts of both countries.

• It has become so easy for us to approach each other. We have come to you in only a few days time. But this very ease of communication takes away from our minds the realisation of the fact. Our visit becomes a picnic. We attend parties, amuse

one another, hold teas, lectures, and keep engagements. Then we go back. It is all too easy.

But things that are valuable you have to pay for. Our ancestors had a great ideal of the spiritual relationship between peoples, but there were no end of difficulties in their way; they could not carry their message in a comfortable manner. Nevertheless, a thousand years ago, they could speak in your language. Why? Because they realised the importance of the work in hand,—how invaluable was this bond of unity between nations, which could surmount the difference of languages. It is the one bond that can save humanity from the utter destruction with which it is threatened to-day, through the selfishness which is torturing mankind and causing misery in the world.

Is it not marvellous how these men at all arrived, and having come, translated their metaphysical ideas into Chinese, a language so utterly different from Sanskrit that the difficulties thereby encountered were far more insurmountable than the mountains they climbed, the deserts they traversed, the seas they navigated?

Our ancestors, thus, had to pay for the truth they served. I never had to pay,—everything is

made so easy and comfortable for me. I have spoken to you, I have read a few lectures, I have enjoyed travelling in your railway carriages which have hurried me to my destination. And yet I say this is not natural. I have had no opportunity to know my fellow passengers, who, in the days of caravans, would have been real to me. As for my audience,—are not they mere shadows? Do I ever know them, or they me? Every man has his own language,—do they, can they understand mine? For three quarters of an hour I pour down a torrent of words upon their hapless heads. It is this that civilisation has made so easy.

But ideas, to be fruitful, must have the collaboration of hearer and speaker. All real union consists of a binding of two hearts. If I could live among you, I could speak to you and you to me, and our thoughts would live through our close contact. They would bear fruit, not immediately, but in the process of time. Obstacles would vanish, misunderstandings would not be possible. Our relation would no longer be one-sided. We would work and produce together from the mutual contact of our hearts and minds. But our professors and schoolmasters demand lectures, from which no deep impression

remains but only some faint outlines upon the memory,—merely events, which find their paragraphs in the newspapers, but do not leave their mark on the hearts of men.

The truths that we received when your pilgrims came to us in India, and ours to you,—that is not lost even now. We may feel that those ideas have to be adapted to the present changed conditions, and we cannot accept in their totality the thoughts and teachings of thousands of years ago. We may even grow angry over them, considering them mischievous, but we can never forget them completely because they were mutually assimilated to our lives. They are there for good or for evil, the result of a real meeting for which our ancestors paid.

What a great pilgrimage was that! What a great time in history! Those wonderful heroes, for the sake of their faith, risked life and accepted banishment from home for long, long years. Many perished and left no trace behind them. A few were spared to tell us their story, but most had no opportunity to leave a record behind. For such relics of theirs as have been spared to us, we should be thankful, as well as for something in them which we may call primitive because their primitive condi-

tions of life had one great advantage,—the coverings were less.

Modern civilisation, like a tailoring department has produced all kinds of coverings,—veils of prejudice which make it very difficult for us to come into touch with those outside, and which cause us even to misunderstand our own countrymen. When life was simple, when people were hospitable and not suspicious, they could share their wealth and happiness, and their lives were welded in a mutual destiny. This was so easy then. Now it is so difficult and therefore we, who still believe in idealism, feel it so keenly.

The bringing of the different human races close together in bonds of love and co-operation, we all believe in; and yet it is difficult because life has become so conventional. You have not the leisure to listen. Even if one of those great teachers, one of those same old monks had come, you would not have had the opportunity, nor perhaps even the curiosity to listen to them. Your days would have been occupied with all kinds of engagements, which are not essential for life, but which merely go to fill up so many gaps in our life, leaving us no leisure to take a genuine interest in our fellow human beings.

Can you even imagine a great messenger to-day coming and settling down at the foot of your western hills, on the bank of the lake? You would say he was an eccentric man; you would send the police to take him in charge and your foreign embassies would deport him, or put him in safe custody. Would you come close to him? No. Your attitude of mind has completely changed.

Let me confess this fact, that I have my faith in higher ideals. I believe that through them we can best serve the higher purposes of life. At the same time, I have a great feeling of delicacy in giving utterance to them, because of certain modern obstacles which make it almost a disreputable thing to be frank and free in the expression of ideas. We have nowadays to be merely commonplace and superficial. We have to wait on the reports in the newspapers, so representative of the whole machinery which has been growing up all over the world for the creation of misunderstanding, and for the making of life superficial. It is difficult to fight through such obstructions and to come to the heart of humanity.

Never think that this is a complaint at not finding a place in your hearts. This is a gathering of intimate friends: I have never been so happy nor so closely

in touch with any other people, as I have been with you. Some I feel as though I had known all my life. My stay here has been made pleasant, beautiful, and I am happy. But in the depth of my heart there is a pain,—I have not been serious enough. I have had no opportunity to be intensely, desperately earnest about your most serious problems. I have been pleasant, nice, superficial. I have followed the spirit of the time which is also easy and superficial, when I ought to have come as one making penance, to take up the heart of life, to prove that I was sincere, not merely literary and poetical.

But it is true I have not had that opportunity; I have missed it. At the same time I hope that something has been done, that some path has been opened up which others may follow, and along this path I also hope that some of you will find your way to India.

I have this one satisfaction that I am at least able to put before you the mission to which these last years of my life have been devoted. As the servant of a great cause I must be frank and strong in urging upon you this mission. I represent in my institution an ideal of brotherhood, where men of different countries and different languages can come together. I

believe in the spiritual unity of man and therefore I ask you to accept this task from me. Unless you come and say, "We also recognise this ideal", I shall know that this mission has failed. Do not treat me as a mere guest, but as one who has come to ask your love, your sympathy and your faith in the following of a great cause. If I find even one among you who accepts it, I shall be happy.

II

This meeting reminds me of the day I came to China, when I had my first reception in this garden. I had come a comparative stranger and I hardly knew any one among those who had come to welcome me. I kept wondering whether China was at all like the pictures I had seen and whether I should ever be able to enter the heart of the country. My mind was full of anxiety that day, thinking all the time that your expectation would probably be exaggerated in regard to one who for you belonged to a region of mystery and who had a reputation founded upon rumour. So in order to let you know that I had my limitations I immediately confessed to you that I was nothing more than a mere poet.

I knew that you have had great men from all

parts of the world to visit you, great philosophers and great scientists from across the sea and I felt very humble when I came amongst you, you who had already heard their words of wisdom. I was very shy that day, for I thought that I was receiving your attention almost under a false personation. I was reminded of the woman Chitra in my play who had the boon of beauty given to her by the God of Love. When through this divine illusion she succeeded in winning her lover's heart, she rebelled against this beauty, crying that all the caresses which her heart craved from her lover were intercepted by this disguise.

I have come to the end of my stay in China and if you are still ready to receive me and to shower upon me such kind words as you have spoken I can accept them; for I have been put upon my trial and I have come through. To-day I have come ever greedy of your love and sympathy and praise. You may lavish your friendship now, so that when I am away I shall remember this evening of my stay which, like some extravagant sunset, has generously spent its full store of colours. Still, however, I have some misgivings. Those of you who have travelled along with me have not yet spoken.

The speaker of this meeting, who has praised me, has been ill all the time since he met me on the first day. So his imaginations about me had no chance of meeting disaster through my personal companionship. Therefore I am still waiting to hear from the friends who had the unfortunate disadvantage of having been too much with me.

Meanwhile I can say one thing. On the first day I also had my expectations. I had in my mind my own vision of China, formed when I was young, China as I had imagined it to be when I was reading my Arabian Nights, the romantic China, as well as the China of which I had caught glimpses when I was in Japan.

My host there had a great collection of Chinese paintings, marvels of beauty, and he would display them casually to me one by one, surprising me into making chance acquaintances with great masterpieces. Thus I built my China on a basis of the great works of your great artists of the older days. I used to say to myself: The Chinese are a great people. They have created a world of beauty. And I remember feeling angry with others who had scant respect for you, who could come to exploit and molest you, and who ignored the debt they owed

you for your civilisation, for the great works which you had produced.

Of course we know that, such a vision, created from the best products of your history, and your past, does not represent the actual life of your people. Yet I firmly believe that it is from the ideal that we get to know the best aspects of the real, and that the complete life is given by these two seen together. I must admit it is difficult for a stranger to discover this innermost truth, but I believe I have caught glimpses of it.

One thing I have felt, and it has often been spoken of by foreigners whom I have met in your land. You are very human. I too have felt the touch of the human in you, and I have come, or at least I hope I have come, close to your heart. I myself am filled, not with a feeling of mere admiration and wonder, but with a feeling of love, especially for those persons with whom I have come into close touch. This personal touch is not an easy thing to obtain.

Some people say that you have the gift of accepting things as they are, that you can take your joy in a naked presentation of reality, which you value, not because it has any association with some-

thing outside itself, but simply because it is before you, attracting your attention. May be it is because of this gift that you have been willing to accept me as I am, not as a poet, not, as some foolish people think, as a philosopher or, as still more foolish people imagine, as a prophet, but as very much of an individual.

Some of my younger new friends have become quite intimate with me, and taking me to be of their own age they show but scant respect for my grey beard or for my reputation. There are so many who would deprive me of the contact of reality by trying to turn me into an idol. I feel certain that God himself is hurt because men keep their daily love for their fellow beings in their homes, and only their weekly worship for Him in the Church. I am glad that my young friends in China never made these mistakes but treated me as their fellow human being.

You have asked me to offer some frank criticisms on this day of my departure. I absolutely refuse to accede to your request. You have critics innumerable, and I do not want to be added to their ranks. Being human myself I can make allowances for your shortcomings, and I love you in spite of them. Who am I to criticise? We people of the Orient

possess all kinds of qualities of which others do not approve,—then why not let us be friends.

You shall have no criticisms from me, and please refrain from criticising me in return. I hope my friends in China will not have the heart to probe into my failings. I never posed as a philosopher, and so I think I can claim to be let alone. Had I been accustomed to living on a pedestal, you could have pulled me down and damaged my spine, but since I have been living on the same level, I trust I am safe.

I have done what was possible,—I have made friends. I did not try to understand too much, but to accept you as you were, and now on leaving I shall bear away the memory of this friendship. But I must not delude myself with exaggerated expectations. My evil fate follows me from my own country to this distant land. It has not been all sunshine of sympathy for me. From the corners of the horizon have come the occasional growlings of angry clouds.

Some of your patriots were afraid that, carrying from India spiritual contagion, I might weaken your vigorous faith in money and materialism. I assure those who thus feel nervous that I am entirely inoffensive; I am powerless to impair their career of

progress, to hold them back from rushing to the market place to sell the soul in which they do not believe. I can even assure them that I have not convinced a single sceptic that he has a soul, or that moral beauty has greater value than material power. I am certain that they will forgive me when they know the result.

CIVILISATION AND PROGRESS

A Chinese author writes : " The terribly tragic aspect of the situation in China is that, while the Chinese nation is called upon to throw away its own civilisation and adopt the civilisation of modern Europe, there is not one single educated man in the whole Empire who has the remotest idea of what this modern European civilisation really is."

I have read elsewhere an observation made by a Frenchman, quoted in a magazine, in which he says that China is not a country but a civilisation. Not having read the full discussion, I cannot be certain what he means. But it seems to me that, according to the writer, China represents an ideal and not the production and collection of certain things, or of information of a particular character about the nature of things ; that is to say, it stands for not merely progress in wealth and knowledge and power but a philosophy of life and the art of living.

The word " civilisation " being a European word, we have hardly yet taken the trouble to find out its real meaning. For over a century we have

accepted it, as we may accept a gift horse, with perfect trust, never caring to count its teeth. Only very lately we have begun to wonder if we realise in its truth what the western people mean when they speak of civilisation. We ask ourselves, "Has it the same meaning as some word in our own language which denotes for us the idea of human perfection?"

Civilisation cannot merely be a growing totality of happenings that by chance have assumed a particular shape and tendency which we consider to be excellent. It must be the expression of some guiding moral force which we have evolved in our society for the object of attaining perfection. The word 'perfection' has a simple and definite meaning when applied to an inanimate thing, or even to a creature whose life has principally a biological significance. But man being complex and always on the path of transcending himself, the meaning of the word 'perfection' as applied to him, cannot be crystallised into an inflexible idea. This has made it possible for different races to have different shades of definition for this term.

The Sanskrit word *dharma* is the nearest synonym in our own language, that occurs to me, for the word civilisation. In fact, we have no other word

except perhaps some newly-coined one, lifeless and devoid of atmosphere. The specific meaning of 'dharma' is that principle which holds us firm together and leads us to our best welfare. The general meaning of this word is the essential quality of a thing.

Dharma for man is the best expression of what he is in truth. He may reject *Dharma* and may choose to be an animal or a machine and thereby may not injure himself, may even gain strength and wealth from an external and material point of view; yet this will be worse than death for him as a man. It has been said in our scriptures : *Through a-dharma (the negation of 'dharma') man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root.*

One who is merely a comfortable money-making machine does not carry in himself the perfect manifestations of man. He is like a gaudily embroidered purse which is empty. He raises a rich altar in his life to the blind and deaf image of a yawning negation and all the costly sacrifices continually offered to it are poured into the mouth of an ever hungry abyss. And according to our scriptures, even while he swells and shouts and violently gesticulates, he perishes.

The same idea has been expressed by the great Chinese sage, Lao-tze, in a different manner, where he says : *One who may die, but will not perish, has life everlasting.* In this he also suggests that when a man reveals his truth he lives, and that truth itself is *dharma*. Civilisation according to this ideal, should be the expression of man's *dharma* in his corporate life.

We have for over a century been dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot, choked by the dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our own helplessness, and overwhelmed by the speed. We agreed to acknowledge that this chariot-drive was progress, and that progress was civilisation. If we ever ventured to ask, "Progress towards what, and progress for whom"—it was considered to be peculiarly and ridiculously oriental to entertain such doubts about the absoluteness of progress. Of late, a voice has come to us bidding us to take count not only of the scientific perfection of the chariot but of the depth of the ditches lying across its path.

Lately I read a paragraph in the *Nation*—the American weekly which is more frank than prudent in its espousal of truth—discussing the bombing of the Mahsud villages in Afghanistan by some British

airmen. The incident commented upon by this paper happened when "one of the bombing planes made a forced landing in the middle of a Mahsud village," and when "the airmen emerged unhurt from the wreckage only to face a committee of five or six old women, who had happened to escape the bombs, brandishing dangerous looking knives." The Editor quotes from the London Times which runs thus :

"A delightful damsel took the airmen under her wing and led them to a cave close by, and a *malik* (chieftain) took up his position at the entrance, keeping off the crowd of forty who had gathered round, shouting and waving knives. Bombs were still being dropped from the air, so the crowd, envious of the security of the cave, pressed in stiflingly, and the airmen pushed their way out in the teeth of the hostile demonstration.....They were fed and were visited by neighbouring *maliks*, who were most friendly, and by a *mullah* (priest), who was equally pleasant. Women looked after the feeding arrangements, and supplies from Ladha and Razmak arrived safely.....On the evening of the twenty-fourth they were escorted to Ladha, where they arrived at daybreak the next day. The escort disguised their captives as Mahsuds as a precaution against attack.....It is significant that the airmen's defenders were first found in the younger generation of both sexes."

In the above narrative the fact comes out strongly that the West has made wonderful progress. She has opened her path across the ethereal region of the earth; the explosive force of the bombs has developed its mechanical power of wholesale destruction to a degree that could be represented in the past only by the personal valour of a large number of men. But such enormous progress has made Man diminutive. He proudly imagines that he expresses himself when he displays the things that he produces and the power that he holds in his hands. The bigness of the results and the mechanical perfection of the apparatus hide from him the fact that the Man in him has been smothered.

When I was a child I had the freedom to make my own toys out of trifles and create my own games from imagination. In my happiness my playmates had their full share; in fact the complete enjoyment of my games depended upon their taking part in them. One day, in this paradise of our childhood, entered a temptation from the market world of the adult.

A toy bought from an English shop was given to one of our companions; it was perfect, it was big, wonderfully life-like. He became proud of the toy

and less mindful of the game; he kept that expensive thing carefully away from us, glorying in his exclusive possession of it, feeling himself superior to his playmates whose toys were cheap. I am sure if he could use the modern language of history he would say that he was more civilised than ourselves to the extent of his owing that ridiculously perfect toy.

One thing he failed to realise in his excitement—a fact which at the moment seemed to him insignificant,—that this temptation obscured something a great deal more perfect than his toy, the revelation of the perfect child. The toy merely expressed his wealth, but not the child's creative spirit, not the child's generous joy in his play, his open invitation to all who were his compeers to his play-world.

Those people who went to bomb the Mahsud villages measured their civilisation by the perfect effectiveness of their instruments which were their latest scientific toys. So strongly do they realise the value of these things that they are ready to tax to the utmost limit of endurance their own people, as well as those others who may occasionally have the chance to taste in their own persons the deadly perfection of these machines. This tax does not merely consist in money but in humanity. These

people put the birth rate of the toy against the death rate of man; and they seem happy. Their science makes their prodigious success so utterly cheap on the material side, that they do not care to count the cost which their spirit has to bear.

On the other hand, those Mahsuds that protected the airmen,—who had come to kill them wholesale, men, women and children,—were primitively crude in their possession of life's toys. But they showed the utmost carefulness in proving the human truth through which they could express their personality. From the so-called *Nordic* point of view, the point of view of the would-be rulers of men, this was foolish.

According to a Mahsud, hospitality is a quality by which he is known as a man and therefore he cannot afford to miss his opportunity, even when dealing with someone who can be systematically relentless in enmity. From the practical point of view, the Mahsud pays for this very dearly, as we must always pay for that which we hold most valuable. It is the mission of civilisation to set for us the right standard of valuation. The Mahsud may have many faults for which he should be held accountable; but that, which has imparted for him more

value to hospitality than to revenge, may not be called progress, but is certainly civilisation.

The ruthlessness, which at a time of crisis disdains to be too scrupulous in extirpating some cause of trouble, and uses its indiscriminate weapon against the guilty and the innocent, the combatant and the non-combatant, is certainly useful. Through such thoroughly unfeeling methods men prosper, they find what they consider desirable, they conquer their enemies,—but there they stop, incomplete.

We can imagine some awful experiment in creation that began at the tail end and abruptly stopped when the stomach was finished. The creature's power of digestion is perfect, so it goes on growing stout, but the result is not beautiful. At the beginning of the late war, when monstrosities of this description appeared in various forms, Western humanity shrank for a moment at the sight. But now she seems to admire them, for they are fondly added to other broods of ugliness in her nursery. Terrific movements, produced by such abnormalities of truncated life, may widen the path of what is called progress for those who want to be rulers of men, but certainly they do not belong to civilisation.

Once there was an occasion for me to motor

down to Calcutta from a place a hundred miles away. Something wrong with the mechanism made it necessary for us to have a repeated supply of water almost every half an hour. At the first village where we were compelled to stop, we asked the help of a man to find water for us. It proved quite a task for him, but when we offered him his reward, poor though he was, he refused to accept it. In fifteen other villages the same thing happened. In a hot country where travellers constantly need water, and where the water supply grows scanty in summer, the villagers consider it their duty to offer water to those who need it. They could easily make a business out of it, following the inexorable law of demand and supply. But the ideal which they consider to be their *'dharma'* has become one with their life. To ask them to sell it, is like asking them to sell their life. They do not claim any personal merit for possessing it.

Lao-tze speaking about the man who is truly good says: *He quickens, but owns not. He acts, but claims not. Merit he accomplishes, but dwells not on it. Since he does not dwell on it, it will never leave him.* That which is outside ourselves we can sell, but that which is one with our life we

cannot. This complete assimilation of truth belongs to the paradise of perfection; it lies beyond the purgatory of self-consciousness. To have reached it proves a long process of civilisation.

To be able to take a considerable amount of trouble in order to supply water to a passing stranger and yet never to claim merit or reward for it seems absurdly and negligibly simple compared with the capacity to produce an amazing number of things per minute. A millionaire tourist ready to corner the food market and grow rich by driving the whole world to the brink of starvation is sure to feel too superior to notice this simple thing while rushing through our villages at sixty miles an hour. For it is not aggressive like a telegraphic pole that pokes our attention with its hugely long finger, or resounding like his own motor engine that shouts its 'discourtesy to the silent music of the spheres.

Yes, it is simple; but that simplicity is the product of centuries of culture; that simplicity is difficult of imitation. In a few years' time it might be possible for me to learn how to make holes in thousands of needles instantaneously by turning a wheel, but to be absolutely simple in one's hospitality to one's enemy or to a stranger requires generations

of training. Simplicity takes no account of its own value, claims no wages, and therefore those who are enamoured of power do not realise that simplicity of spiritual expression is the highest product of civilisation.

A process of disintegration can kill this rare fruit of a higher life, as a whole race of birds possessing some rare beauty can be made extinct, by the vulgar power of avarice which has civilised weapons. This fact was clearly proved to me when I found that the only place where a price was expected for the water given to us, was when we reached a suburb of Calcutta, where life was richer, the water supply easier and more abundant, and where progress flowed in numerous channels in all directions. We must get to know this force of disintegration, and how it works.

Creation is the revelation of truth through the rhythm of form, its dualism consisting of the expression and the material. Of these the material must offer itself as a sacrifice in absolute loyalty to the expression. It must know that it can be no end in itself and therefore by the pressure of its voluminousness it should not carry men away from their creative activities.

In India we have a species of Sanskrit poem in which all the complex grammatical rules are deliberately illustrated. This produces continual sparks of delight in the minds of some readers, who, even in a work of art, seek some tangible proof of power, almost physical in its manifestation. This shows that by special cultivation a kind of mentality can be produced which is capable of taking delight in the mere spectacle of power, manipulating materials, forgetting that materials have no value of their own. We see the same thing in the modern western world where progress is measured by the speed with which materials are multiplying. Their measure by horse-power is one before which spirit-power has made itself humble. Horse-power drives, spirit-power sustains. That which drives is called the principle of progress, that which sustains we call *dharma*; and this word *dharma* I believe should be translated as civilisation.

We have heard from the scientist that an atom consists of a nucleus drawing its companions round it in a rhythm of dance and thus forms a perfect unit. A civilisation remains healthy and strong as long as it contains in its centre some creative ideal that binds its members in a rhythm of relationship. It is a

relationship which is beautiful and not merely utilitarian. When this creative ideal which is *dharma* gives place to some overmastering passion, then this civilisation bursts into conflagration like a star that has lighted its own funeral pyre. From its modest moderation of light this civilisation flares up into a blaze of the first magnitude, only for its boisterous brilliancy to end in violent extinction.

Western society, for some ages, had for its central motive force a great spiritual ideal and not merely an impetus to progress. It had its religious faith which was actively busy in bringing about reconciliation among the conflicting forces of society. What it held to be of immense value was the perfection of human relationship, to be obtained by controlling the egoistic instincts of man, and by giving him a philosophy of his fundamental unity. In the course of the last two centuries, however, the West found access to Nature's storehouse of power, and ever since all its attention has irresistibly been drawn in that direction. Its inner ideal of civilisation has thus been pushed aside by the love of power.

Man's ideal has for its field of activity the whole of human nature from its depth to its height. The light of this ideal is gentle because diffused, its life

is subdued because all-embracing. It is serene because it is great; it is meek because it is comprehensive. But our passion is narrow; its limited field gives it an intensity of impulse. Such an aggressive force of greed has of late possessed the western mind. This has happened within a very short period, and has created a sudden deluge of things smothering all time and space over the earth. All that was human is being broken into fragments.

In trying to maintain some semblance of unity among such a chaos of fractions, organisations are established for manufacturing, in a wholesale quantity, peace, or piety, or social welfare. But such organisations can never have the character of a perfect unit. Surely they are needed as we need our drinking vessels, but more for the water than for themselves. They are mere burdens by themselves as they are; and if we take pleasure in multiplying them indefinitely the result may be astoundingly clever, but crushingly fatal to life.

I have read somewhere an observation of Plato in which he says: "An intelligent and socialised community will continue to grow only as long as it can remain a unit; beyond that point growth

must cease, or the community will 'disintegrate and cease to be an organic being.' That spirit of the unit is only maintained when its nucleus is some living sentiment of *dharma*, leading to co-operation and to a common sharing of life's gifts.

Lao-tze has said: *Not knowing the eternal causes passions to rise; and that is evil.* Comforts and conveniences are pursued, things are multiplied, the eternal is obscured, the passions are roused, and the evil marches triumphant from continent to continent mutilating man and crushing under its callous tread life's bloom,—the product of the Mother-heart that dwells in the sanctuary of human nature. And we are asked to build triumphal arches for this march of death. Let us at least refuse to acknowledge its victory, even if we cannot retard its progress. Let us die, as your Lao-tze has said, and yet not perish.

It is said in our scriptures: *In greed is sin, in sin, death.* Your philosopher has said: *No greater calamity than greed.* These sentences carry the wisdom of ages. When greed becomes the dominant character of a people it forebodes destruction for them, and no mere organisation like the League of Nations can ever save them. To let the flood of

self-seeking flow unchecked from the heart of the Nation and at the same time try to build an outer dam across its path can never succeed. The deluge will burst forth with a greater force because of the resistance. Lao-tze says: *Not self-seeking, he gaineth life.* Life's principle is in this and therefore in a society all the trainings and teachings that make for life are those that help us in our control of selfish greed.

When civilisation was living, that is to say, when most of its movements were related to an inner ideal and not to an external compulsion, then money had not the same value as it has now. Do you not realise what an immense difference that fact has made in our life, and how barbarously it has cheapened those things which are invaluable in our inheritance? We have grown so used to this calamitous change that we do not fully realise the indignity it imposes upon us.

I ask you to imagine a day, if it does ever come, when in a meeting everybody will leave his chair and stand up in awe if a man enters there who has a greater number of human skulls strung in his necklace than have his fellow beings. We can have no hesitation to-day in admitting that this would be pure

barbarism. 'Are there no other tokens of a similar degradation for man,—are there no other forms of human skulls than those which the savages so proudly wear?

In olden times the mere hoarding of millions was never considered as wealth unless it had some crown of glory with which to proclaim its ideal greatness. In the East as well as in the West, man, in order to save his inherent dignity, positively despised money that represented merely a right of possession and no moral responsibility. Money-making as a profession was everywhere contemptuously treated, and men, who made big profits the sole end of their life, were looked down upon.

There was a time in India when our Brahmins were held in reverence, not only for their learning and purity of life, but for their utter indifference to material wealth. This only shows that our society was fully conscious that its very life depended upon its ideals, which were never to be insulted by anything that belonged to a passion for self-seeking. But because to-day progress is considered to be characteristic of civilisation, and because this progress goes on gathering an unending material extension, money has established its universal

sovereignty. For in this world of ambition money is the central power-house sending impulses in all directions.

In former days, the monarchs of men were not ashamed humbly to pay their respect to men of intellect or those who had spiritual or creative gifts. For the qualities of the higher life were the motive force of the civilisation of those times. But to-day, men, whatever their position, never think that they are humiliating themselves when they offer their homage to men of corpulent cash, not always because they expect any benefit therefrom, but because of the bare fact of its possession. This denotes a defeat of the complete man by the material man. This huge degradation, like a slimy reptile, has spread its coils round the whole human world. Before we can rescue humanity from the bondage of its interminable tail, we must free our mind from the sacrilege of worship offered to this unholy power, this evil dragon which can never be the presiding deity of the civilisation of man.

I am sure you know that this soulless progeny of greed has already opened its elastic jaws wide over the fair limbs of your country, wider perhaps than in any other part of the world. I earnestly

hope that you will develop some means to rescue her from her destination towards the hollow of its interior.

But the danger is not so much from the enemy who attacks, but from the defender who may betray. It fills my heart with a great feeling of dismay when, among your present generation of young men, I see signs of their succumbing to the depravity of fascination for an evil power which allures with its enormity. They go about seeking for civilisation amongst the wilderness of sky-scrapers, in the shrieking headlines of news-journals, and the shouting vociferation of demagogues. They leave their own great prophets who had a far-seeking vision of truth, and roam in the dusk begging for the loan of light from some glow-worm which can only hold its niggardly lantern for the purpose of crawling towards its nearest dust.

They will learn the meaning of the word civilisation, when they come back home and truly understand what their great master, Lao-tze, wanted to teach when he said: *Those who have virtue attend to their obligations; those who have no virtue attend to their claims.* In this saying he has expressed in a few words what I have tried to explain in this

paper. Progress which is not related to an inner ideal, but to an attraction which is external, seeks to satisfy our endless claims. But civilisation, which is an ideal, gives us power and joy to fulfil our obligations.

About the stiffening of life and hardening of heart caused by the organisation of power and production, he says with profound truth :

The grass as well as the trees, while they live, are tender and supple; when they die they are rigid and dry. Thus the hard and the strong are the companions of death. The tender and the delicate are the companions of life. Therefore he who in arms is strong will not conquer. The strong and the great stay below. The tender and the delicate stay above.

Our sage in India says, as I have quoted before : *By the help of anti-dharma men prosper, they find what they desire, they conquer enemies, but they perish at the root. The wealth which is not welfare grows with a rapid vigour, but it carries within itself the seed of death. This wealth has been nourished in the West by the blood of men and the harvest is ripening. The same warning was also given centuries ago by your sage when he said :*

Things thrive and then grow old. This is called Un-Reason. Un-Reason soon ceases.

Your teacher has said: *To increase life is called a blessing.* For, the increase of life, unlike the increase of things, never transcends the limits of life's unity. The mountain pine grows tall and great, its every inch maintains the rhythm of an inner balance, and therefore even in its seeming extravagance it has the reticent grace of self-control. The tree and its productions belong to the same vital system of cadence; the timber, leaves, flowers and fruits are one with the tree; their exuberance is not a malady of exaggeration, but a blessing. But systems which mainly are for making profits and not for supplying life's needs, encourage an obesity of ugliness in our society obliterating the fine modulations of personality from its features. Not being one with our life, they do not conform to its rhythm.

Our living society, which should have dance in its steps, music in its voice, beauty in its limbs, which should have its metaphor in stars and flowers, maintaining its harmony with God's creation, becomes, under the tyranny of a prolific greed, like an overladen market-cart jolting and creaking on the road that leads from things to the Nothing, tearing ugly

ruts across the green life till it breaks down under the burden of its vulgarity on the wayside reaching nowhere. For, *this is called Un-Reason*, as your teacher has said, *and Un-Reason soon ceases*.

SATYAM

Since, in the East, our mind grew weary of producing new thoughts and our life ceased to carry out new experiments we have been losing our sense of balance through want of practice. This has been the cause of a lack of proportion in our thinking, leading to inaccuracy and exaggeration, and of a lack of reticence in our spiritual vision producing a wilderness of symbolism and superstition.

On the other hand when we try to follow the West in its pursuit after speed we forget that any movement that tears itself away from the eternal standard of rhythm loses itself in an uncontrolled tumult of explosions. Such a movement belongs to the giants of disproportion who let loose immense forces from the bondage of beneficent limits and startle the world with their turbulence.

It is evident that life in the West, like an iceberg tottering under the weight of its growing hugeness, has lost its moral balance. She knows that things are behaving in a drunken manner, but she does not know how to stop. She is casting about for all kinds of devices whereby she may save herself from a crash,

not by closing her drinking booths, but in spite of them.

The young generation of the East, who in their intoxication with the new wine of boisterous energy from the West are likewise growing unstable in their gait, are content jeeringly to remark that our pursuit of the cult of perfection which gives balance has led us to inertia. They forget that balance is even more needed for that which moves than for that which rests.

I was travelling to China. One of my Indian friends asked his Japanese fellow-traveller why Japan neglected to cultivate friendliness with China. Without giving a direct answer, the Japanese asked a German passenger, who was there, if he could ever think of Germany and France uniting in the bonds of friendship. It clearly shows the mind of the schoolboy in the present generation, of the Eastern youth brought up under Western school-masters. They have learnt by rote their texts, but never their lesson. They are proud when they can mimic the voice and gesture of their teacher, reproduce his language, earn their full number of marks and a patting on the back, while they are not even aware that the living lesson has escaped them.

It evidently caused great satisfaction to this Japanese young man, who, I am sure, does not represent the best minds of his people, to know that the feeling of animosity that exists between China and Japan has its analogy in Europe. He failed to realise the fearful meaning of the hatred which furiously drives Germany and France to ruin, in a vicious circle of mutual destruction.

This conversation set my mind thinking how the carefully nurtured noxious plant of national egoism is shedding its seeds all over the world, making our callow schoolboys of the East rejoice because the harvest produced by these seeds,—the harvest of antipathy with its endless cycle of self-destruction,—bears a western name of high-sounding distinction.

And yet the time has come when we must realise the ancient truth, which has been relegated to the lumber room of truisms, that what saves us is not pride, nor the satisfaction of hatred, nor the black lies of diplomacy, nor the power represented by money, muscle, or organisation.

Great civilisations in the East as well as in the West, have flourished in the past because they produced food for the spirit of man for all time; they had their life in the faith in ideals, the faith which

is creative. These great civilisations were at last run to death by men of the type of our precocious school-boys of modern times, smart and superficially critical, worshippers of self, shrewd bargainers in the market of profit and power, efficient in their handling of the ephemeral, who presumed to buy human souls with money and threw them into dust-bins when they had been sucked dry, and who, eventually, driven by suicidal forces of passion, set their neighbours' houses on fire and were themselves enveloped by the flame.

It is some great ideal which creates great societies of men; it is blind passion which breaks them to pieces. They thrive so long as they produce food for life; they perish when they suck life dry in insatiate self-gratification. We have been taught by our sages that it is Truth which saves man from annihilation. Let me try to explain this saying of our sages.

It has been the tradition in India to attach our mind closely to some *mantram*, some great text, and daily to concentrate our thought upon it, while its meaning grows one with our being, and gives our worldly life its equilibrium in the truth and peace that dwell in the eternal. One such *mantram* which has

been of great help to me, begins with the word *satyam*, indicating that the Supreme Being is *satyam*, which means Truth.

Man is afraid of the numerous, of numbers which add but do not connect. It is wearisome for him to approach things through their several individual doors and pay to each one of them its separate homage of recognition.

At the beginning of life's experience a child puts everything into its mouth, until it gets to know that all that comes to its hand is not food. In the primitive stage of our intellect, our mind, in its indiscriminate greed, grabs at detached facts and tries to make a store of them. At last the mind comes to know that what it seeks is, not the things themselves, but, through them, some value.

Where can it be that man may realise *satyam*, the Supreme Reality? Nothing is ever in a state of permanence; things rapidly change their form and become something else, even as we try to fix our gaze on them. The very mountains behave like shifting shadows on time's stage. The stars break out into light on the bosom of darkness and dissolve into oblivion. So, in Sanskrit, our term for the world flux is *samsāra*, that which is ever on the move,—and

this *samsāra* we speak of as *maya*, we call it a dream. Where then is Truth?

Truth has its full expression in this movement itself,—in the current which always leaps over the fixed boulders of finality and can therefore suggest the indefinable, the infinite. In a dance it becomes possible for the different gestures to move together and yet not thwart one another because they are the expression of a certain musical truth which comprehends and yet transcends each separate part of its manifestation.

Moralists have often lugubriously cried out that the world is vanity because everything in it moves and changes. They might as well say that a song is not real because every note of it is transient, giving place to another. We have to know that this moving and changing world, because of its mutability, is giving expression to a truth which is eternal. It would come to a standstill in a crash of discord, had it not such truth permeating and transcending it.

It is to the person, who keeps his eyes solely fixed upon this aspect of the world which is an unceasing series of changes, that the world appears as delusion, as the play of Kali, the black divinity of destruction. The world is, for him, an unmean-

ing progression of things, an evolution that goes blindly jumping from chance to chance on a haphazard path of survival and he has no scruples in struggling to gain advantage for himself, dealing cruel blows to others who come in his way. He does not suspect that thereby he hurts his own truth, because, in the scheme of things, he recognises no such truth at all. A child can tear, without compunction, the pages of a book for the purposes of his play, because for him those pages have no serious truth.

The way to be considerate in our dealings with the world is to realise the permanent meaning which underlies it and which makes each one of its changing facts touch its own end every moment. It happens in this way with our own movements of vital growth; they are innumerable, and yet they have their joy for us because every passing fraction of their totality immediately reaches the end, which is life itself. This very moment, when I am speaking, all the separate words of mine would be a burden to me, if they were not the expression of my life, which is the source of their truth.

What is evident in this world, is the endless procession of moving things; but what is to be realised, is the Supreme Truth by which the world is

permeated. When our greed of wealth overlooks this great truth and behaves as if there was nothing in this world but the fact of these moving things, then our pride increases with the amount of things produced and collected, and jealous competition thunders down the path of conflict towards dark futility.

All our true enjoyment is in the realisation of perfection. This can be reached, not through augmentation, but through renunciation of the material for the sake of the ideal. The amount of material which a true artist uses is the minimum which is required for his purpose. It would be barbarous to make it too gorgeously profuse, forgetting the final value of the ideal. When the artist reaches that ideal he reaches his enjoyment.

According to the Upanishads, the complete aspect of Truth is in the reconciliation of the finite and the infinite, of everchanging things and the eternal spirit of perfection. When in our life and work the harmony between these two is broken, then either our life is thinned into a shadow, or it becomes gross with accumulations.

We must confess that in the East our minds have dwelt more upon the peace of the Eternal One and

less on the movement of its manifestations in the many. This mentality represents a kind of miserliness about one's spiritual wealth which tries to keep it secure by shutting it within a limited receptacle. Such narrow limitation of our world has given us long life, but not that vigour of life which is ready to earn a richness of experience in untried adventures. Truth's ideals, which once sprung in the East from the ever wakeful personalities of great souls, have in course of centuries become stagnant, their flow of inspiration choked by the reeds and rubbish of a lazy imagination.

When the current of the mind grows feeble, things that are dead accumulate and their ponderous immobility intimidates our life into stillness. This awful burden of the dead we see in this country as well as in my own motherland. Because we have surrendered our right to question and have deliberately refused to understand, we are constantly paying the penalty of sacrificing our soul on the altar of the lifeless. The best homage of our reverence we offer to the deaf, to the blind, to the darkly irresponsible. We have elaborately built huge mansions to give room to ghosts, depriving the living of shelter and sustenance.

We, in the East, are extending in every department of our life the burial ground of the past, erecting tombstones in the soil where crops should be produced for the growing need of the future. What immense energy do we waste in trying to prevent dead bones from crumbling into the dust ! The current of immortal truth is growing narrower in our life every day ; the sand which chokes it claims reverent attention from us owing to the sublimity of its immutable barrenness.

Ideals of perfection have to be re-born age after age, taking new bodies and occupying new fields of life. Otherwise, if they end in mere thoughtless repetitions, human beings become puppets of the past with a ludicrous pride in the strings that produce perfectly correct gestures. Solemn doll's play of this kind could perhaps go on indefinitely if its stage were but secure from outward intrusion, and was not liable to be hustled out of gear by irreverent crowds who rudely snatch away its adornments for their own distant markets.

It is, however, just such a disrespectful shaking up by these marketmen that may lead us to our salvation. It has already roused us from our languor ; and the awakened, at least, must think, even

while the drowsy may continue to mumble their repetitions. The first effect of our sudden discomfiture is a mistrust of the original ideals themselves. It may take some time before we are able to realise that it was not those ideals that were to blame, but our own treatment of them. For if our ideals, which are for giving freedom to our spirit, are shut up in a dungeon of blind habit then they become the strongest fetters that keep our spirit enchained.

Life is rebellious. It grows by breaking the forms that enclose it, the forms that only give shelter for a particular period, and then become a prison if they do not change. Death is the last fight for freedom on the part of this born rebel who is always trying to break through the form that has gone wrong. In our society wherever that spirit of rebellion, which is the spirit of life, is completely checked, the tyranny of form becomes supreme; there words become more sacred than spirit, and custom more sacrosanct than reason. There life grows feeble because its manifestations are confined within too narrow limits. For, as we have seen, the completeness of reality is there where truth finds its expression in movement. We do not serve Truth by passively clinging to it with our habits, but by deliberately relating all our

movements to it as the centre, thus attaining both rhythm of control and freedom of spirit.

It is true that he who wants to realise truth, not merely through self-control, but also through freedom, is assailed by dangers and difficulties; but like a brook which finds its voice more fully as it trips over its bed of flints and stones, this very resistance brings a richer music into life. For those who are in love with a serene slothfulness, with whom every movement in the direction of active creative effort counts as an offence against the ancient dignity of tradition,—their being is smothered under exuberant growths of disease and distress, poverty, insult and defeat. They are punished with the deprivation of freedom because they try to keep Truth fettered.

I have said that life is rebellious. Some of our Eastern schoolboys may at once jump to the conclusion that this rebellion must take form in imitation of the West. But they should know that while dead custom is plagiarism from our own past life, imitation would be plagiarism from other peoples' life. Both constitute slavery to the unreal. The former, though a chain, at least fits our figure; the latter, for all its misfit, is just as much a chain. Life

frees itself through its growth and not through its borrowings.

It will never do for the Orient to trail behind the West like an overgrown appendix, vainly trying to lash the sky in defiance of the divine. For humanity this will not only be a useless excess, but a disappointment and a deception. For if the East ever tries to duplicate Western life, the duplicate is bound to be a forgery.

The West no doubt has overwhelmed us with its flood of commodities, tourists, machine guns, school masters and a religion which is great, but whose followers are intent upon lengthening the list of its recruits, and not upon following it in details that bring no profit, or in practices that are inconvenient. But one great service the West has done us by bringing the force of its living mind to bear upon our life; it has stirred our thoughts into activity. For its mind is great; its intellectual life has in its centre intellectual probity, the standard of truth.

The first effect of our mind being startled from its sleep was to make it intensely conscious of what was before it; but now that the surprise of awakening has subsided, the time has come to know what is within. We are beginning to know ourselves. We

are finding our own mind, because the mind from the West claims our attention.

I have no doubt in my own mind that in the East our principal characteristic is not to set too high a price upon success through gaining advantage, but upon self-realisation through fulfilling our *dharma*, our ideals. Let the awakening of the East impel us consciously to discover the essential and the universal meaning of our own civilisation, to remove the debris from its path, to rescue it from the bondage of stagnation that produces impurities, to make it a great channel of communication between all human races.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Early in 1923 Rabindranath Tagore was invited by Liang-chi-chao, President of the Universities Lecture Association of Peking *, to deliver a course of lectures in China. Although the invitation had originally come as a personal one, Rabindranath Tagore wanted to go out on behalf of the Visva-bharati and conveyed his wishes to the Samsad (Governing Body of the Visva-bharati) which immediately decided that he should be requested to represent and act on behalf of the Visva-bharati throughout his Chinese tour.

Arrangements were also made for a deputation of Indian scholars to accompany the poet. Kshiti-mohan Sastri, Professor of Indology, Santiniketan,

* LIANG-CHI-CHAO—Born 1872. One of the most brilliant of the band of reformers who succeeded in establishing the Republic and later on in defeating the treacherous bid for monarchy by Yuan-Shih-K'ai. He has written extensively on politics, education, religion, and sociology, in a style, which, for beauty and lucidity combined, may well rank with that of China's masterpieces. It has, in fact, been said that "his style displays so classical a finish that the Chinese often shed tears over his compositions, simply from admiration of their beauty." He has been Minister of Justice and also of Finance, under the Republic; and in 1919 he attended the Peace Conference at Paris as delegate.

—(*Gems of Chinese Literature* by HERBERT A.ILES.)

Nandalal Bose, the Head of the Kala-bhavan (School of Art) and L. K. Elmhirst, Director of Sriniketan (Institute of Rural Reconstruction) formed the Visva-bharati party. Dr. Kalidas Nag joined the deputation on behalf of the Calcutta University.

Rabindranath Tagore and party left Calcutta on the 21st March, 1924. On their way to China they halted at Rangoon, Penang and Kuala Lumpur and reached Shanghai, on the 12th April, where they stopped for nearly one week. They visited Nanking on the 20th April and reached Peking on the 23rd and stayed there for nearly a month. They left Peking on the 20th May and halting for 2 days in Tai-yuan-fu (capital of Shansi) reached Hangkow on the 25th and Shanghai on the 28th. The party left China on the 29th May.

From the day of his landing in China on the 12th April to the day of his departure on the 29th May, the poet gave innumerable talks most of which were delivered informally without any written notes. Some of these talks were reported in the Chinese newspapers, often in a very inadequate form and a few were reprinted in the Visva-bharati Bulletin and the Visva-bharati Quarterly. It has been now considered desirable to republish them in book form.

No attempt has been made to keep the talks distinct; they have been re-arranged under a few general heads. The text is based mainly on newspaper reports and has not been revised by the poet.

On the occasion of the formal reception given to Rabindranath Tagore in Peking on the 25th April, Liang-chi-chao delivered a speech of welcome which has been incorporated as an introduction to the present volume.

The poet has dedicated the book to the young Chinese poet Susima (Tsemou-Hsu), who accompanied the Visva-bharati party throughout the greater part of the tour.

CALCUTTA,
1st February, 1925.

P. C. M.

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